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REVELATION

AND

THE BIBLE

AN ATTEMPT AT RECONSTRUCTION

BY

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London

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PREFACE.

THIS *book is the fulfilment of a promise made in the preface to the second edition of* Inspiration and the Bible: *that work was an Inquiry, and seemed to many readers destructive rather than positive. As the traditional view of the Bible gradually fades in the clear light of knowledge and truth, those who reluctantly surrender the antique dogma naturally ask for a definite faith to take its place; they want to know at once how they can admit the truth and yet retain their Bible, how they can grant the human handiwork and yet grasp the Divine substance of the Book.*

The following pages are a series of suggestions towards this most hopeful work of reconstruction. The spirit in which they are written may be best illustrated by the following transcript from life:—When that distinguished critic, M. Scherer, was a theological

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student at Strasburg he prepared for Professor Reuss' Class a very able essay, in which he maintained his faith in the plenary and literal inspiration of the Sacred Canon. Against all arguments he defended the position, which was in his opinion vital, and with indomitable energy repelled what he considered the dangerous negations of his fellow-students. At the conclusion of the debate, Professor Reuss addressed these words to the eager champion :—" My dear friend, the arguments of science do not affect you because the subject in question is in your eyes a matter of faith. Well, allow me to say to you in the name of the faith you propose to defend, that the ground on which you have taken your stand is an extremely dangerous one. To identify faith in Christ with the historical belief that is bound up with Biblical documents is to enter on a path which may lead you very far. The least weakening of your theory of the Canon will shake the whole superstructure of your Christianity, and the reaction may be as subtle as it will be radical. Consider whether it would not be prudent to establish your faith on a more sure foundation, and remember that our Reformers initiated the Theology which you call

new." The professor was a prophet, as M. Scherer's subsequent intellectual career proved. That view which the student advocated must always lead to unbelief if at any time a ray of scientific, historic, or critical truth should effect an entrance into the mind which entertains it. That many entertain it, and yet retain their faith by vigorously excluding all the truths which might threaten it, is a fact which to truth-loving men is quite irrelevant.

It will be observed that in dealing with the Old Testament I have followed the lines which Professor Driver has laid down in his Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament. *As an old pupil of his, though not in the present department of study, I know his mingled candour and caution. I feel, therefore, much confidence in accepting his verdict in the many cases where I am myself not competent to give an opinion. I ought also to gratefully acknowledge the invaluable service which he has rendered me by revising the proofs, pointing out mistakes, and making innumerable suggestions which have for the most part been incorporated in the text.*

In dealing with the New Testament literature, for the special purpose of this book, I have for the

most part started from the critical conclusions which are given in the latest edition of the Encyclopædia Britannica, *because that is a work accessible to all. My whole position, which is that of a settled faith in the Revelation of the Bible, makes it a matter of secondary importance what the conclusions of the so-called Higher Criticism may be. To have accepted the unproved assumptions of the orthodox tradition would have been farther from the truth and less fruitful than to presuppose, in general, that the best investigations of the best scholars have given us at any rate an approximate account of the dates, authorship, and scope of the several books. But the method of inquiry and argument which is here advocated remains unaffected by the particular conclusions at which Criticism may arrive.*

Again let me say that this book pretends to be nothing more than a series of tentative suggestions. But any one who, making use of the Index, puts together the definite statements about revelation may gather with some distinctness how the matter shapes itself in my own mind.

R. F. HORTON.

HAMPSTEAD, *May*, 1892.

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REVELATION AND THE BIBLE.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

It is perhaps a proof of the revelation contained in the Bible that large numbers of Christian men cannot divest themselves of the idea that everything contained in the Bible is revelation. But this hasty inference, drawn no doubt with reverence and the best intention, is not in the end serviceable either to truth or to faith; for let it be once roundly asserted that every statement of the Holy Scripture must be accepted as a fact or a precept or an idea proceeding from the lips of the Unseen God, recorded for men as an infallible authority which is to override all other sources of knowledge, and the enemies of faith will immediately select from the miscellaneous writings in the Bible passages which are obviously inconsistent with the dogma, and will proceed to pin

us down to the consequences of that bold assertion. "You maintain," they will say, "that the Bible is throughout a revelation from God; here are certain parts of it which certainly do not come from Him; therefore, as you declare it all to be homogeneous, none of it comes from Him." This is indeed the main contention of Unbelief at the present time. The dogma of Orthodoxy is pushed to its logical conclusion. To the claim that the whole Bible is Revelation is opposed the demonstration that parts of the Bible are not, and the dogmatist has found no better method of maintaining his ground than that of shutting his eyes to fact and bitterly denouncing those who are unable to do the same. But the time seems to have arrived when this method appears unsatisfactory to believers as it has long appeared contemptible to unbelievers; and earnest men are everywhere asking themselves how it comes to pass that they are perfectly clear in their conviction about the revelation in the Bible, and yet other people are equally clear in pointing out elements in the Bible which are not revelation. We are all beginning to recognise that we must distinguish and define. The truth has failed to emerge because, from mistaken notions of reverence, we have been content to leave the whole question in confusion, and we have not perceived that error itself is in such a case more favourable to truth;

we have dreaded error; at last we begin to dread confusion almost as much. We are asking for distinct ideas. When we speak of *Revelation*, what are we to understand by it? When we say that the Bible is a revelation, what exactly do we mean? When things are pointed out in the Bible which are certainly not correct, not true, are we required by Faith stoutly to declare that they are correct, that they are true, and to maintain faith by believing a lie? Or is it possible to frankly and even joyfully admit these new and demonstrated facts without surrendering one scrap of our real faith in Revelation? Such questions as these, urged as they are with more and more insistence by thoughtful minds, are most hopeful signs of the times. Here, as in many other departments of inquiry, to put the questions correctly is practically the main point. The answer glides into the mind at the moment that the question issues from it, or if no answer comes at once, we are at least able to stand firm on the foothold which the question has afforded us; we do not maintain the perilous position of "one foot on sea, one foot on shore," which resulted from the old confusion of ideas.

We may proceed at once to answer in a provisional way the questions which have just been stated. What is meant by *Revelation?* The answer may be

very simple. By *Revelation* is meant a truth or truths received from God into the minds of men, not by the ordinary methods of inquiry, such as observation and reasoning, but by a direct operation of the Holy Spirit. All truth that is reached by the ordinary methods of inquiry comes in the last resort from God, but there are things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, and which the reason of man is not adequate to grasp ; these things, if they are to be known at all, can be shown to us only by methods which are out of the ordinary ; they must be *revealed*. Now we must distinguish two uses of the word "revelation." The process by which the truths just mentioned are delivered to men, whether it be a historical evolution, an elaborate typology, the immediate communication of the Spirit of God with the spirit of man, or a Person containing in Himself the whole circle of Truth, may be conveniently covered by the term *revelation*, but when we wish to use the word with strict accuracy it is better to give it the narrower meaning of the truths which are ultimately revealed by the process. In the loose sense of the word the whole Bible is a Revelation, because it is the process worked out through many centuries of human experience ; but in the exact sense of the word the whole Bible is not, and cannot be, a Revelation, for it contains, and must contain, historical and other

materials which are obtained in the ordinary way; it employs scientific and philosophic conceptions which were necessarily transient; it includes, and must include, the many guesses, glimpses, and foreshadowings of truths not yet *revealed*, the broken lights which were to merge into the clear day, the fragmentary arcs which would eventually be "a perfect round."

The distinction which has just been drawn prepares us at once for another. There is no mistake commoner than that of mixing up the idea of revelation with a very different matter, viz., historical or scientific truth. On the one hand, the assailants of the Bible think that they have discredited it if they have pointed out a blunder in date or name or event, or if they have shown that "Modern Science" has exploded its scientific conceptions. And on the other hand, the defenders of the Bible feel that they are committed to show that no historical error occurs in its pages, and that its scientific teaching squares with the discoveries of Modern Science, or if not, is to override the conclusions of Science. But all this is mere confusion of thought. Historical facts are not a subject of Revelation, for they are ascertainable by the ordinary methods of human inquiry. The course of events which history attempts to describe may, it is true, be a revelation, and if the historical data

should be so vitiated that the general results of those events were lost, then the revelation might be lost, but the ordinary infirmities of historical composition, the uncertainty about points of detail, the occasional confusion of names, or even the admission of certain legendary or traditional elements, will not prevent us from apprehending the facts and perceiving the revelation which is conveyed by them. It does not prove that a history in the Bible is inspired because it is confirmed by an Assyrian inscription or an Egyptian papyrus, nor does it prove that the history is uninspired because fresh historical discoveries enable us to check, or even to correct, it. General credibility, such as we demand in all historical writings, is all that is necessary in the records of events which were themselves a revelation of God to men. But further, where the events themselves are not a revelation, and where all confirmation of the events is necessarily wanting, the stories which have come down through tradition, and even the tales which form the folk-lore of a people may in the hands of an inspired writer become a vehicle of religious teaching; the element of revelation may be totally disconnected from the accuracy or even the actuality of the story; of this we shall have illustrations in the next chapter. It is better at once to get this position quite clear: Historical Truth and Revealed Truth are essentially

distinct. Historical Truth is not *ipso facto* revelation. Revelation is not necessarily historical truth. A parable may convey more revelation than the most exact chronological table; and a myth in the hands of an inspired writer may teach more about God than Darwin's *Descent of Man*.

And this leads us to observe that Scientific Fact is not a subject of Revelation. The methods of science are adequate to the needs of science. If the records of Creation were written in the rocks, and if it was possible by the patient investigations of successive ages to correctly read the records, it would be at variance with our first idea of Revelation that these results should be forestalled by a supernatural lesson in natural science ages ago. Scientific truth is of inestimable value, and it is a legitimate subject of speculation why Lyell and Darwin did not emerge in the Mosaic period; but it is no prejudice to Revelation to admit that they did not, and therefore that any religious truth which had to be revealed to men would necessarily come by the vehicle of such scientific conceptions as existed then. Certainly we entirely misconceive the scope of Revelation if we think to discredit it by scientific discoveries of a later date which are at variance with it, or if on the ground of the Revelation we decline to accept these discoveries when they are supported by adequate

proofs. Here again it is well to get the position clear at once. Scientific Truth and Revealed Truth are essentially different. There is no indication that God ever intended to *reveal* a scientific fact. There is no indication that He rejected as instruments of revelation men who were scientifically ignorant. Just as to-day He has used men who probably know nothing of science to civilise and to spiritualise and to Christianise those inhabitants of Terra del Fuego whom the greatest scientific man of his time pronounced to be no better than the beasts, so in the course of His self-revelation to men He used that Semitic race which seemed, scientifically speaking, the most backward, and made them the vehicle of religious truth, while He made the Greeks the pioneers of science and art, and the Romans the leaders in political organisation. If Joshua and Isaiah were ignorant of the solar system, and therefore referred certain phenomena to the wrong causes, this does not in the least affect Joshua's historical work as the conqueror of Canaan, or Isaiah's historical work as the spiritual leader of his own generation, and the prophetic seer of a generation still to come. If Peter, or the author of *The Second Epistle of Peter*, held the ancient belief that the heavens were a solid and tangible firmament overspanning the earth, which could be rolled up and removed in

the great day of judgment, this scientific misconception need not in the least affect the wisdom and force of his moral appeals and his spiritual teaching. Nay, if Biblical writers from first to last know nothing of the Origin of Man as it is understood in the modern sense, and are strangers to comparative biology, or to comparative physiology, that is a totally irrelevant argument in discussing the subject of Revelation, for no one supposes that the laws of biology or physiology would be given by Revelation, or that God would wait for the arrival of modern biologists and physiologists in order to convey through them the truths which only Revelation could impart.

But without prolonging the discussion any further in this direction, the distinctions which have been drawn will enable us to grasp more firmly the definition of Revelation already given. Revelation, in the strictest use of the term, is that body of truth which is made known to man in a special way, because the ordinary methods of discovering truth would not suffice. Broadly speaking, then, the Revelation in the Bible is precisely that which apart from the Bible not only would not, but could not, have been known. Thus they are not far wrong who say that the only thing *revealed* in the Bible is God. Much else is told in the Bible, much that is true, and beautiful, and precious, but that might have been

told elsewhere or in other ways. But God, Creator, Orderer, Sovereign, Saviour, Judge, of the world, is *revealed* in the Bible—*i.e.*, apart from the Bible we could not know Him. They, too, are not far wrong who speak of the Bible as the Book of God, though of course it is a term foreign to the Bible itself. The Bible is the Book of God because it contains the progressive Revelation of God. If the Bible were obliterated and its truths forgotten, we might have aspirations after God, surmises, glimpses, intuitions, imaginations, but God would be unrevealed to us. Here we have a clue, yet we must be careful how we use it. Because this is the Book of God we have no reason to say that everything said about God in the Book is true. The historical and progressive character of the Book gives no foothold for such unintelligent and slumberous dogmatism. In the earlier phases of the Revelation, for example, God is frequently identified with one land ; it is assumed that other lands have their gods as Israel has Yahvéh. David speaks as if being driven from the borders of the sacred land meant being banished from God Himself.[1] This is evidently a phase in revelation, not the completed truth. Or, look at another fact : some

[1] 1 Sam. xxvi. 19, 20. Cf. Deut. iv. 19, where Yahvéh is spoken of as allotting the various objects of false worship unto all nations under the whole heaven, but retaining Israel for Himself.

of the most beautiful things said about God occur in the speeches of Job's three friends, yet the Almighty describes these very speeches as "darkening counsel. Or again, the knowledge of God under the law is denounced by the prophets, and still more by our Lord, as little better than elaborate ignorance of Him. Clearly in this case if we lose the historic perspective, if we neglect to interpret the earlier by the later, if we fail to see that it is the complete Revelation, and that only, which gives us the complete idea of God, our use of the Book may become dangerous and misleading. God is revealed in the Bible, not by selected texts, but in broad progressive lines, by ideas which germinate and grow, by a light which struggles from a brilliant dawn through shadows to a perfect day.

But it may be said, Surely the Bible *reveals* much else besides God. Does it not reveal, for example, the future life, heaven with its rewards, and hell with its punishments? This question can only be answered very cautiously as we proceed. In a certain sense the revelation of God Himself involves many subsidiary truths such as the doctrine of rewards and punishments, but we have to distinguish carefully between conceptions of a future world, which might be current in any given age of revelation, and might therefore be employed by the teacher as the clothing

of a truth which he wished to convey, and definite revelations of the future world given expressly by the specific methods of revelation. Even our Lord uses the language of His own day when He speaks about the Valley of Hinnom [1] with its ever-burning fires; and it is necessary to penetrate behind the veil of language, and behind the mere *tesseræ* of familiar images before we can get at a truth, and say, "This is a new revelation given us by God Himself."

On the whole it is perhaps safest to cling, at least provisionally, to the idea that all Revelation is really the revealing of God. What is human can be learnt by human means; what is Divine can be learnt only by the Divine Spirit. And a great clearness comes into our conception of the Bible directly we recognise that its real gist is to show us God, whom otherwise we could not know. With this clue in our hands we can answer the second question which was mooted at the beginning: When we say that the Bible is a revelation, what exactly do we mean? We mean, not that it is a general encyclopædia of information, a text-book of biology, a primer of physiology, a synopsis of history, a prophetic forecast of the future, but that it is a compilation of writings through which God is revealed to us, not in a moment of time, but in a historical evolution, not in a few proof texts, but

[1] Mark ix. 43.

in the whole connected mass of the two literatures of which the book consists. It is true, human life and human destiny are incidentally revealed in this light of a revealed God, but only incidentally. As a treatise on ethics, or a *Vade Mecum* of practical conduct, the book does not profess to serve. It professes to reveal God and show us the way to Him. If it does not do that for us, it does, in effect, nothing. Since the consummate revelation of God is in the person of Christ, the whole aim of the Scripture may be said to be to bring men to Christ. If we search the Scriptures without reaching that end, our search is in vain. As a recent German writer has put it, the Bible is "a collection of books which are written in God's Spirit and in a Divine faith-power, out of life for life, out of history for history: their unique centre, the touchstone and end of the whole and of its several parts is and remains the living historical person of Jesus Christ." [1]

If now we have a provisional answer to the questions, What is Revelation, and in what sense is the Bible a Revelation? the other questions which were raised will easily answer themselves. When the progress of knowledge casts some doubt on statements contained in the Bible, Faith, so far from command-

[1] *Bittere Wahrheiten*, p. 77. Prof. Bornemann's most interesting reply to Von Egidy's *Ernste Gedanken*.

ing us to reject these new facts as an assault, commands us to investigate them, and if they are proved, to receive them as a new light, on Revelation. Our conception of Revelation is so situated and constructed that it is flatly impossible for any truth which the human mind can discover to shake it. Revelation is that truth which the human mind cannot discover. The Bible itself, as every step in our investigation must prove, is the consistent record of later truths superseding earlier truths, and of primitive notions becoming antiquated in the light of broadening knowledge. The Book of the Law is made up of frequent revisions of the Law as the primordial community of Israel developed into the Jewish Church. The prophets utter forecasts that the whole system of the Law with its sacrifices and ordinances was soon to pass away. The New Testament is the abolition, because the fulfilment, of the Law. Nothing could be more instructive than our Lord's own words upon this subject. He protests that no jot or tittle of the Law shall pass before it is fulfilled, but He sets His own ordinances over against what "was said to them of old time," and as a matter of historical fact that Law has passed away; even the Jews neglect all the elaborate ritual of the altar, and the priesthood has ceased from Israel. What does it mean? Is it not clear that the old truth is

confirmed and fulfilled by merging into a new truth? And if our Lord treated the venerable ancient Scriptures in this way, we who claim to have the mind of Christ must apply the same method. We shall not give to Scripture a finality which He refused to give; we shall not think we serve Truth by saying that no jot or tittle shall pass away when He, the Truth, Himself abolished the whole system of the Ancient Law. We shall carefully avoid the tendency to crystallise and stereotype those books which derived all their value from being stages in a growth and imperfect preparations for a larger truth to come.

But if we are to apply the Spirit of Christ to the interpretation of Scripture we must not hesitate to apply it even to those New Testament writings which speak most expressly of Him, and we must be prepared for those direct manifestations of the Spirit to the Christian consciousness which He Himself promised to His disciples. There were many things, He said, which He could not tell them then, but when He, the Spirit of truth, should come, He would lead them into all truth. That power of the Spirit was to effect greater things than even He Himself had done. It is customary to limit these further revealings of the Spirit to the Apostolic writings of the New Testament, but the Apostolic writings give no countenance to that limitation. Rather it is the tendency of

those writings, and especially of the latest, the most matured of them, to turn our attention to the direct influence of the Holy Spirit, and that sovereign way of being taught and led. The idea, therefore, of a Revelation confined to the Sacred Writings cannot be said to be the idea of those Sacred Writings themselves. The textual and mechanical methods which result from that idea are as foreign to the Spirit of Christ as the Rabbinical methods of dealing with the Old Testament were repugnant to Him when He was in the flesh. Just in proportion as we see in Him the bright flower and fruit of the Scriptures shall we hesitate to exalt the Scriptures, root and branch, deciduous leaves, and cast off membranes, to an equality with Him.

And now, before bringing this introductory chapter to a close, it may be well to sketch out the path which will be followed in the present investigation. We have already in broad lines defined the substance of Revelation; it remains for us to patiently deal with the various parts of which the Bible consists, and to each part to apply varying tests with a view of determining what elements of Revelation it contains. With each successive book in our hands we should like to accurately discriminate how much of this, and in what sense, and with what limitations, should be literally regarded as Revelation, and what

parts of the writing or what modes of its setting must be regarded as merely human?

In pursuing this investigation, if we are to keep it within reasonable bounds, it will be desirable to mass the writings together in groups which are in some sense homogeneous, for to take each of the books and deal with it separately would, in a brief work like this, lead us too far afield. It will be necessary to deal with the Book of Genesis by itself, because of the many remarkable features, and the abiding interest, of that book. But the rest of the Pentateuch may for our purposes be handled together under the title of the Tôrah, or the Law. We must then take in hand the Historical Books of the Old Testament, breaking them into two series: the first, which flows in a connected narrative from Genesis up to the end of the Books of Kings, and the second, which covers the same ground, though with a different handling and a different spirit, and then resumes the story after the Captivity up to the time of Nehemiah; this second series includes the *Paraleipomena*, as they are called in the Greek version, or the Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah, and the Book of Esther. We shall then consider the all-important work of the Prophets which had so much to do with the development of Israel's religious life. And, to conclude the review of the Old Testament, we shall try to handle briefly the *Hagiographa*,

or *Kethubim*, which form the third division of the Jewish Canon. When we pass to the New Testament we shall find that for our purposes the literature can be best divided into the Memoirs of our Lord, the Pauline Letters, the Early Pages of the Christian History, the Minor Letters, and the Johannine Writings.

As has just been said, varying tests will have to be applied to these very different groups, and we must not expect anything like an uniform method of treatment. But one or two principles must guide our study throughout, and with a statement of these principles this Introduction may close. First, we must constantly try to get the writing under discussion in its right historical relations; this cannot always be done in a way to command an universal assent, for about the question of dates and authorship in the case of many Old Testament, and some New Testament, books *sub judice lis est*, but it may be at once premised that, except in one or two instances which may easily be distinguished, the method need not be affected by these disputes of the "higher criticism." Should the ultimate verdict be other than that which is assumed in our treatment of the book or books, a corresponding change in the estimate will easily be made by one who has followed the method of reasoning. It must be our constant

object to illustrate and to prove that the actual contents of Revelation, as it has been defined in this chapter, cannot possibly be affected by the disputed authorship, or, in most cases even, by the difficulty in fixing the period, of the composition. From this first will naturally follow a second principle of inquiry. In estimating the degree or quantity of revelation in a given book it will be wise to compare it, not so much with the finished results of revelation which are before us in the New Testament, as with the notions, beliefs, and practices which existed so far as we know among contemporary, and especially contiguous, peoples, for it is evident that a truth may have been a startling revelation twenty centuries ago which has become to us almost a commonplace; it is a very common observation that an original genius is often less appreciated by posterity than might be expected, just because he has been so successful in inoculating subsequent generations with his ideas; still more in the course of revelation we are apt to forget that imperfect truths, given as men were able to bear them, were once almost meteoric in their brilliancy by comparison with the surrounding darkness; we now remember only that they are imperfect, we forget that they were truths, and such truths as could not have been discovered unless God had lifted at least a corner of the veil.

Once again, another principle must rule all our study, a principle which seems at first sight almost exactly contradictory to the one which has just been stated. While we throw ourselves back into the past and endeavour to judge it with the eyes of a contemporary, it is necessary to carry with us the motto, *Respice Finem ;* we must never for a moment forget that all ended in a great consummation, Jesus Christ. If the crown of God's self-revelation was that perfect and unique personality, and if all previous revelation was a preparation for Him, we shall be keen to recognise every filament and fibre of truth which eventually works its way from dark subsoils of history or of thought into that finished Flower. And if we keep this principle always in view, at the same time trying to avoid all extravagance and unreasonableness in its application, we shall be constantly reminded of a fact which is among the most wonderful in the many wonderful features of the Bible. The broad historic development of Israel very obviously leads up to Christ, and all the institutions of the Law and of the Congregation point to that marvellous spiritual completion ; the modes of thought, the expectations, the aspirations of Israel's thinkers and prophets no less clearly prognosticate the great Person that was to be ; these historical and spiritual elements of revelation even a careless reader will find

it difficult to miss if he studies the Old Testament in the light of the New. But there is something more curious still: how comes it that one story after another in the narrative parts of the Old Testament lends itself to a typological treatment, so that the events are, as St. Paul would say, *ἀλληγορούμενα*,[1] allegories of things which were only realised centuries later? How comes it that a narrative like that of Abraham and Isaac presents a startling illustration of the great Sacrifice which was to be offered on, or near, Mount Moriah, in a distant and unseen future? How comes it that in reading the story of Joseph, as natural and simple a tale as was ever penned, the Christian constantly receives the impression that even in little details it is a veiled presentation of Jesus and His saving work? How comes it that the first Joshua is in name and function the counterpart, or rather the foreshadowing, of that second Joshua, whom we call by the Greek equivalent of the name, Jesus? And when this typical significance of events and names and persons is carried on through century after century of a national literature, in ways which no human foresight or wisdom could possibly have devised, so that a Christian taking up the Old Testament with Christ as the key finds in his hands a series of pictures, as it were, all representing with outline more or

[1] Gal. iv. 24.

less distinct, and with colours more or less harmonised, the Lord whom he has learnt to know, is it not plain that we are here face to face with a mysterious element of Revelation which we must constantly bear in mind and honestly seek to explain? The mere scholar is naturally impatient of this typological element in the Bible; he resents the extravagances and absurdities to which, from Barnabas to Swedenborg, the recognition of this element seems to have predisposed interpreters; he insists in the cold dry light of reason on treating the literature of the Bible merely as literature, and the history merely as history; on the other hand, an uncritical pietist is outraged by the scholarly method, and in the vindication of what he clearly sees to be the facts of this typology he is apt to denounce the scholar and to run into all lengths of absurdity in carrying out the one method which is plain to him. But the scholar and the pietist must meet on the common ground of seeking to understand Revelation; if either is absent the investigation will halt; two keys simultaneously applied are needed to unlock this ancient casket. No researches of criticism have explained away the mysterious typology of the Scripture. No indignant protests of simple unlearned Bible students have delayed the inevitable work of criticism. But the time seems to have come when scholarship should

seek to explain the features of the Bible which it is powerless to explain away, and when pietism should discern in scholarship its best friend, although its sternest judge.

It is, so we may surmise, the outstanding charge against the scholars of the "higher criticism" that they are blind to the religious interests involved in their discussions; in analysing the warp and the woof of the tapestry they fail to observe or to appreciate the design and the colour; they appear, for the most part, more anxious to deal a blow at error than to build the fabric of truth; they insist on dealing with the Bible merely as literature when the world is demanding it as religious food, and pious people are sure that in it they have found the bread on which the soul can live. It must be confessed that the students who have been hitherto drawn into the pioneer work of Biblical Criticism are not, for the most part, rich religious natures; compared with the full-blooded and impassioned eloquence of an unreasoning dogmatism, they may appear jejune and halting. But that is no matter for surprise. The question is, not, Are these critics trustworthy religious teachers? but rather, Are the truths which they have brought to light consistent with the strong and vital faith in God and Revelation which is essential to the power and efficiency of the Church?

The answer to this question appears to the present writer by no means doubtful. If the simple recognition of established facts were to shatter our religious faith, rob us of our God, and draw a line of erasure right through our Bible, it would be a plain duty to accept the established facts. Unless Truth seems to us more valuable than *our* God, our God will certainly not be the real God, for He is Truth. Unless we feel the solemn responsibility of accepting proved facts, whatever havoc they may make with our beliefs, our beliefs never can be true, for if the beliefs themselves are true we shall yet hold them untruly. "Blind unbelief is sure to err," and so is blind Belief. We take a step in the direction of Death whenever we deliberately resolve to deny or ignore a Fact. But the results of Criticism, and the admission of scientific facts, do not and cannot rob us of our God —and if they alter our way of regarding the Bible, they take it from us only to give it to us again. What they shatter is that hoary coating of prejudice and superstition which always forms upon the Truth during ages of sleepy dogmatism and intellectual apathy. This book will have entirely failed in its purpose if it leaves the reader in any doubt that the Revelation of God is confirmed rather than shaken, illumined rather than obscured, by the new methods of dealing with the Scriptures which fresh study and

accumulating knowledge have rendered necessary. It is strange that we, who have regarded with equanimity the fierce assaults of Deism, Atheism, and Secularism upon the Sacred Book, should show a timorous anxiety when Christian scholars themselves are dealing in no iconoclastic spirit with the facts which gave a handle to those embittered assailants.[1] It is not an edifying spectacle to see the children of the Reformation seeking to silence inquiry by abuse and misrepresentation. They who think to protect the Bible by a Dogma must in the end discredit it, for they imply that their Dogma is really the foundation on which the Bible rests. As a matter of fact, the Bible stood before that crude dogma of infallible inspiration was invented, and the Bible will stand when that dogma has passed away. That it rests not upon dogma, but upon the solid foundations of demonstrable fact, the following pages seek to show.

[1] As Professor Cheyne has recently said, "Among those who have thoroughly studied the Old Testament from a modern point of view the period of negation and destruction is past, and the work of gentle and gradual reconstruction has begun." (*Aids to the Devout Study of Criticism*, p. 72.)

CHAPTER II.

THE *TOLEDOTH* OR GENESIS.

THE first book in the Bible was always called among the Jews by the word with which it begins, בְּרֵאשִׁית. Our English name for it is simply an exact transliteration of the Greek title in the Septuagint, *Γένεσις*. But if we would adopt a name which would be descriptive of the contents, it might be well to utilise the Hebrew word which is translated by Generations (תּוֹלְדוֹת). To this Hebrew word perhaps the nearest English equivalent is *Origins*.

This is the book of the Origins. Looking back to its beginning, from its closing chapter it is clear that the main purpose has been to describe the Origin of the people called Israel; but this people is seen emerging out of the other peoples of the earth, and accordingly the origins of these other peoples are sketched in outline. The inquiry is pushed up to the origin of the human race, and in the last resort to that of the earth itself and even the heavens.

When the main purpose of the book is thus conceived we shall necessarily arrange the materials in a perspective which is slightly different from that which is commonly presented. Standing, as it were, in the midst of Israel in Egypt on the eve of what may be called Israel's national Genesis, we look back to the beginnings, which lie behind like a land of far distances where everything is not equally distinct, and bounded by an horizon which is luminous with golden mists rather than with sharply defined facts; such images as have the appearance of solid realities are symbolical pictures in the cloud, not valueless, rather infinitely valuable, but their value lies in their symbolism, and not in their actuality.

Taking up the Book of Genesis, then, on the principles defined in the Introductory chapter, with the view of answering the question, Wherein does the *revelation* of the book consist? we are obliged to give in the first instance a broad answer, and to avoid details which may have the same confusing effect upon the mind as if in trying to comprehend a picture worked in tapestry we were to occupy ourselves with a minute investigation of the stitches. There are two salient and striking elements of revelation in the book: first, a God dealing plastically with the world, with man, with history; second, a nation drawn out of remote and obscure beginnings

by the will of the God, and shaped by an unceasing discipline for a far-off destiny. These are the two foci of the ellipse, and in the orbit of the ellipse all the events move in simple orderliness. The nature of the God is not fully explained—His attributes are quite imperfectly presented. As might be expected in dealing with very primitive traditions and prehistorical events, the book gives us gleams of a Divine Being and echoes of a Divine voice, as they might be perceived in the childhood of the world, rather than any adequate portraiture of the Eternal God. The origin of the nation, too, is given only in sketches; the book struggles with the manifold difficulties of a remote antiquity, a varying tradition, historical sources which do not always agree. As we experience elsewhere in the origins of a nation, so here we find the historical elements seem often to be reached by stripping old stories of their mythical elements, or by grasping the kernel of fact in developed legends. But about one point there remains no shadow of doubt: both the God and the providential development of the nation appear as a distinct revelation; for the God is definitely the Being who is manifested in the subsequent development of revelation, growing clearer and clearer until the full-orbed light is reached; and the nation advances from these shadowy origins to a historical completeness, and in

its changing experiences of suffering and achievement finally realises the promise contained in its germ. The more steadily this broad revelation in the book of the Origins is contemplated, and the more completely the light of subsequent facts is brought to illustrate and illuminate it, the mind grows more and more convinced of the essential fact, and more and more indifferent to the secondary details. It becomes impatient alike of the attacks made upon the details, and of the defence of them offered by apologists, when both attack and defence are essentially irrelevant, diverting attention from the bold contours and the broad issues of the book.

But if we are prepared to hold firmly to the great truths which are revealed in the book as a whole, we may with safety and profit descend to test the degree or the kind of revelation contained in the several parts. Let us review in succession the five primeval Toledoth: (1) The generations, or origins, of the heaven and of the earth.[1] (2) The generations, or origins, of Adam.[2] (3) The generations, or origins, of Noah.[3] (4) The generations, or origins, of Noah's sons.[4] (5) The generations, or origins, of Shem.[5] Then we can proceed to glance much more cursorily at the five Patriarchal Toledoth of Terah, of Ishmael,

[1] Gen. ii. 4. [2] Gen. v. 1. [3] Gen. vi. 9.
[4] Gen. x. 1. [5] Gen. xi. 10.

of Isaac, of Esau, of Jacob, with which the rest of the book is concerned.

First of all, the *Origins of the Heaven and the Earth.* The existence of two narratives lying side by side in the first and second chapters of Genesis is very interesting and full of suggestion so soon as the bearing of the fact is understood. It would take us too far away from the present purpose to give even a brief sketch of the literary analysis to which scholarship has subjected the Pentateuchal literature, but it may be said at once and in a word that one half of the acknowledged difficulties of the Pentateuch disappear when these established literary facts are distinctly recognised. The series of books from Genesis to Joshua is, in the form that is familiar to us, the work of the scribes who reverently compiled and edited the Law after the return from Exile. The earliest materials in the Hexateuch are as old as Moses; the latest come from the period when his institutions had achieved their utmost development and assumed their final form. The literary strata in the Work can be determined with some degree of certainty by literary and historical tests which it is impossible to recapitulate here. Suffice it to say that the sublime passage with which the Bible opens belongs to that latest stratum of the literature which represents the completest form of the Mosaic

Law.[1] The second account of the origins of the earth and of man (Gen. ii. 4*b*–iii. 24) is taken from the prophetic writer of the Southern Kingdom, who is called the Yahvist, because of his preference for the sacred name יהוה (Yahvéh or Jehovah) in his writings.

When the author or editor of Genesis puts two different accounts of the Creation side by side without any attempt to harmonise them, or to remove the discrepancies which are visible from the different standpoints, we seem warned at once that we are not to seek the Revelation in the details of either narrative, but rather in the spiritual conceptions or the ethical lessons which both the narratives presuppose. And this first impression is confirmed by every step of subsequent inquiry. The attempt to square either of these accounts with the results of Modern Science is labour thrown away. If they were scientifically correct it would not prove that they were revealed; if they are scientifically crude and inexact it does not show that there is no revelation contained in them. A far more remunerative field of investigation lies in the direction of Comparative Mythology. If we can place these Origins

[1] This *Priestly Code*, as it is now usually called, is designated P by our latest English scholars, but Wellhausen uses the letter Q, and Dillmann the letter A as its distinctive mark. All, however, are agreed that the Priest's Code is the framework of the Hexateuch, into which the other materials from the Yahvist J, the second Elohist E, and the Deuteronomist D are fitted in. (Driver's *Introduction*, p. 9.)

of the world and of man side by side with the Cosmogonies of the Ancients, noticing where agreement betrays the existence of common human traditions, and where disagreement suggests that a Divine element has entered in, we shall find ourselves on the track of determining what revelation is contained in these narratives. And strange to say, the researches of our own day have put the materials of comparison into our hands. The clay tablets found by George Smith in the library of Assurbanipal, on the site of Nineveh, have revealed the conceptions of the Creation which prevailed in Babylon, not only at the time of the Exile, but at the time of Moses, and probably centuries before. Two passages translated by Prof. Sayce from this Babylonian account of the Creation will enable the reader to see at any rate the principle of the comparison suggested. The first of these passages is taken from the Fourth Tablet, which describes the battle between Bel and Tiamat :—

> At that time the heaven above had not yet announced,
> or the earth beneath recorded, a name ;
> the unopened deep was their generator,
> Mummu Tiamat [1] was the mother (bearer) of them all.
> Their waters were embosomed as one, and
> the cornfield was unharvested, the pasture was ungrown.

[1] The connection between Mummu Tiamat (the chaos of the sea) and the תְּהוֹם of Gen. i. 2 will strike every reader of the Hebrew Bible. It is obvious, too, to connect the בָּהוּ of Gen. i. 2 with the woman Baau, who, in our version of the Phœnician Cosmogony, appears as Night.

At that time the gods had not appeared, any one of them,
by no name were they recorded, no destiny (had they fixed).
Then the (great) gods were created,
Lakhmu and Lakhamu issued forth (the first),
until they grew up (when)
Ansar and Ki-sar were created.
Long were the days, extended (was the time, and)
the gods Anu, (Bel and Ea were born).
Ansar and Ki-sar (gave them birth).

The other passage is taken from the Fifth Tablet, which describes the creation of the heavenly bodies:—

He (Anu) illuminated the Moon-god that he might watch over the night,
and ordained for him the ending of the night that the day may be known,
(saying) Month by month without break keep watch (?) in thy disk;
at the beginning of the month kindle the night,
announcing thy horns that the heaven may know.
On the seventh day, (filling thy) disk,
thou shalt open indeed its narrow contraction.[1]

The impression of similarity to the first chapter of Genesis is enhanced by noticing that the creative work is recorded on seven tablets, and that the Babylonians divided their days into sevens, and called the seventh "śa-bat-tu," treating it as a day of repose.

But while the resemblances between the Chaldean and the Hebraic cosmogony are striking and interesting, the differences are far more significant. The account just quoted from the Fourth Tablet is clearly a myth; the origin of the world is materialistic, for that Tiamat which precedes the creation of the gods

[1] Sayce's *Hibbert Lecture*, p. 384, &c.

is simply Chaos personified. It may be observed, too, that other passages of the account, if we may trust Berosus, represented this primeval Chaos as swarming with monstrous living creatures. In a word, according to this mythology, the gods did not create the world, but rather the world created them. The distinctive note of Gen. i., on the other hand, is that "in the beginning" there was God, and He created the whole universe. Again, the Sabbath of the Babylonian records does not appear as a Divine institution, while in Gen. i. it seems only to be mentioned in order to enforce by the example of the Creator the observance among men of the seventh day of rest.

If it were possible to extend our survey and to institute a comparison with the cosmogonies of other religions, the impression made by reference to this Babylonian document would be deepened. On the one hand, it is clear that there are some elements in Genesis, chap. i., which occur in the common tradition of kindred peoples, not to say in the traditions of other branches of the human family. Thus the general scheme of Creation in seven periods, the notion of a primeval chaos, the introduction of a God speaking, the eulogy on the several stages of creation, the mention of the heavenly bodies as placed to determine the year, are features of this

Chaldean Cosmogony which has accidentally been brought to light in our own day. We can hardly maintain that these details are a *revelation* in the Book of Genesis without admitting that they are a revelation in the clay tablets of Assurbanipal, which go back to an older date, as well. And according to the principle of our inquiry we shall rather conclude that in these and similar details the Biblical writer simply uses the notions which came to his hand, the primitive conception of the world's origin which prevailed in the plain of Mesopotamia at the time when he wrote. But, on the other hand, the further the comparison with other religious systems is carried, the more convincing is the conclusion that the whole tenor of this first chapter of Genesis is unique. God is at the beginning. He has no equal, no rival. The spiritual beings with whom He consults, "Let us make man," are not other gods, but merely "ministers of his that do his pleasure." The whole Creation proceeds from His will and the word of His mouth. Further, the stages of the Creation are distinctly marked, and if the writer is ignorant of the scientific connection between the several orders of beings, he is at least aware of the position which man holds in the scale as the crown and summit of created things; he is able to say, "God created man in his own image, male

and female created he them." This clear and firm conception of God as the Creator, and of man as the image of his Creator, is in itself sufficiently wonderful, and can leave no doubt on the mind of the student of Comparative Mythology that in this point lies the essential *revelation* of this chapter. If the chapter had been composed for the first time to-day —in the schools of Darwin or Haeckel, for example— it would be a *revelation;* it would be, not a scientific statement, but the assertion of two consummate truths which science is not able to discover. Positivism cannot say, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," or, "God created man in his own image." If these truths are not revealed they cannot be known, and yet when they are revealed they become the key to all the science of God, or Theology, and to all the science of Man, or Anthropology. But if this chapter would be a revelation, coming for the first time into the world to-day, how much more was it a revelation, issuing from the little company of those who preserved the Law in the midst of the corruptions and defilements and idolatries of Babylon! When the position is correctly stated and cleared from false issues, it is questionable whether even the Positivist will not come to perceive that here is, indeed, not perhaps a scientific truth, but yet a truth, a truth of Revelation.

And if we are right in regarding this chapter as a product of the Captivity, how profoundly significant is the absence of all mythological elements from the stately record![1] Those sad-eyed exiles, surrounded by the most prolific mythologies, and breathing the air, speaking even the language, of a people that were steeped in the myths of their religious literature, yet, under the guidance of the Spirit, could thus conceive and describe the Supreme God at work in the making of the world and in the generation of His son, Man.

Second, the *Origins of Adam.* The other version of the Creation, contained in chap. ii. 4, *et seq.*, is from the literary point of view older than chap. i. It is more picturesque, but less sublime. The order of the Creation is very different. Man is made before the vegetation, then come the beasts of the field, and finally woman. No reference is made to the heavenly bodies. There is a beautiful local colour in the narrative, and while every detail reminds us that we are here dealing not with history, but with allegory, we are conscious that the con-

[1] The trace of the myth of the world-egg in the מְרַחֶפֶת of Gen. i. 2, and the reference to the Sun-god ruling the day in לְמֶמְשֶׁלֶת הַיּוֹם of verse 16, as also the תְּהוֹם and בֹּהוּ, alluded to in a previous note, are simply linguistic, and are no more to be treated as marks of a mythological belief than our names for the days of the week imply a belief in Wodin or Thor or Freyda. (Delitzsch, *Genesis*, vol. i. p. 63. T. and T. Clark.)

ceptions come from a time when the ideas of God were far more primitive, and more anthropomorphic than those implied in chap. i. It might be thought that the very expressions "tree of life" and "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" would immediately show to an intelligent mind that the story is symbolical. The four rivers, again, issuing from one source, especially when two of them are identified as the Tigris and the Euphrates, and the other two are most probably the Indus and the Nile, seem to warn us of themselves against looking for any literal accuracy in the narrative. The Garden of Eden would have to be as large as a continent to contain the widely-parted sources of these historic streams. The origin of woman, too, from the rib of a man is evidently a symbolical conception, which is paralleled in other mythologies.[1] Further, a serpent that speaks proclaims itself to be in the region of fable. In the Babylonian mythology the serpent was connected with the god of wisdom, "more subtil than any beast of the field" which had been created in the land of Edina.[2] And so in the Persian mythology the serpent Dahaka is the creature by whose means Ahriman destroys the first-created land

[1] One of the magical texts of the Assyrian tablets says of the seven evil spirits, "The woman from the loins of the man they bring forth." (Sayce, *Hibbert Lecture*, p. 395.)

[2] Sayce, *Hibbert Lecture*, p. 282.

of Ormuzd, and Ahriman himself is represented as appearing in a serpent form. These are but a few of the more obvious indications that this second version of the Creation is not even meant to be historical.

Does it therefore cease to be a revelation? Because it differs entirely from the magnificent presentation of chap. i., does it contain no truths which may be described as revealed? That is the question which confronts us, and the answer is overwhelming and conclusive. Once take the view that we are here dealing with a pictorial representation of the Origin of Man and of Woman, and the Origin of human sin, once lay aside the childish misinterpretation that would treat the story as literal fact, and immediately the whole passage begins to glow with religious significance, and the note of inspiration strikes upon the ear. Man is appointed as the lord of the earth: he is placed in a garden of joy to be tried: woman is made as his companion, and monogamy is recognised as a divine thought: the origin of sin is found in a temptation from without, a suggestion of a malignant power, not a natural inclination of man's own heart, so that man in his very sin is still redeemable: the temptation lies in the direction of leaving the path of obedience to God, and entering on a life of independent moral development; the punishment lies in the expulsion

from the garden of simple and untried felicity; the redemption is promised in a distant victory which shall be attained by the "seed of the woman." [1] These are the religious truths conveyed through the story. They are truths which are confirmed by all subsequent knowledge. No thinker, no scientist, has given a better account of man's origin, of woman's relation to man, of the origin of evil and the promise of victory over it, than this which, in a half-poetical, half-allegorical form, is furnished by Gen. ii. Here is the Man, the creature of the ground, אָדָם; here is חַוָּה, the "life-mother"; here is their essential relation to God and to one another; here is the trial, the fall, the hope of humanity, told in a tale of simplicity which the sage cannot fathom, yet the child can understand. How came these truths into a Hebrew myth? Granted that as a myth it hides rather than displays the physical origin of man, how comes it that on the veil of the myth are delineated these moral and spiritual lessons which it behoves us all as men to know and to ponder? There can be but one answer: this is revelation; the Yahvist, or whatever else you may call this author, spoke and wrote under the instruction of a Holy Spirit of truth, and told

[1] See Dr. Lyman Abbott's *Evolution of Christianity*, p. 225, for a fine description of the way in which the Story of Eden is repeated in the life of every human being.

the world what the world, but for such teaching, might not recognise even now.

In the account of the immediate descendants of the Man (אָדָם) we have first the narrative given by the Yahvist, chap. iv., and then the same ground covered by an extract from the author of chap. i. or P. A careful comparison of these two chapters, iv. and v., is very instructive in showing us the difference between the two sources. The Yahvist preserves one of the most ancient pieces of song in the world (iv. 23, 24). P gives a dry genealogical list, broken only by a clause of sublime beauty (v. 24). But there is no need to dwell upon these chapters in our present study, and we must hasten on to the third of our primitive Toledoth.

Third, the *Origins of Noah.* It will be self-evident to any student of comparative religions that it is vain to seek for any revelation in the mere recorded fact of a Deluge. Every primeval religion in Asia, Africa, and America, contains in one form or another the same fact. One of the most interesting primitive traditions of that disastrous event is that which Assyriologists have deciphered in the clay tablets from Nineveh. This story, we are assured, dates from Accadian times, two thousand years before our era. In many respects it corresponds with the version of Berosus, which has been familiar to the

Church for centuries through the *Chronicon* of Eusebius. But the eleventh tablet of the Isdubar Epic, containing the Chaldean account of the Flood, comes to us not through the questionable channels of a Church historian; it starts into life from the ruins of a forgotten city. It was in 1872 that George Smith gave to the world this remarkable fragment in which Hâsisadra relates to Isdubar how he escaped the flood by building a vessel, and bringing into it what living creatures he could get. The flood rose for six days and seven nights, then it began to abate. When his vessel stranded on the mountain in the land of Nizir he let out the dove, which, finding no foothold, returned; then the swallow, which also returned; but the raven, though wading in the water, refused to come back. When he issued from the ship, Hâsisadra erected an altar on the summit of the mountain and offered a sacrifice, and "the gods sucked in the scent, the gods sucked in the well-smelling scent; the gods gathered like flies over the sacrificer." Bêl was angry because any one had escaped the flood; but the other gods soothed him, saying that it was unjust to punish the innocent with the guilty, so that he went into the vessel, blessed Hâsisadra and his wife, and declared that they should be forthwith raised to the gods.[1]

[1] Schrader, *Die Keilinschriften und das Alte Testament*, 1883.

This close and interesting resemblance between the narrative in the Book of Genesis and the far more ancient narrative from the Assyrian tablets, shows us that it cannot be in the record of the event that we must seek for the element of revelation. It may be said that the clay tablets confirm the historical reality of the Flood: that is quite possible, but as they bring the event into the region of historical tradition, they demonstrate that as a narrative of fact it is no longer to be regarded as a revelation. That there was a great Deluge in the Mesopotamian valley, from which only a handful of human beings escaped, may be regarded as a fact; but the narrative of that fact occurring in the Book of Genesis would not of itself constitute a revelation, while—paradoxical as it may sound—the narrative in Gen. vi.–ix. would constitute a revelation, whether such a flood had happened or not: for it is in the handling of the tradition and the religious interpretation of the catastrophe that the Biblical narrative appears to differ entirely from the records of similar deluges in other religious sources. It is the same *One* God, in whose presence the crowding figures of the Babylonian Pantheon disappear; it is the same prevailing motive of righteousness, the same relation between sinful man and his Creator, the same Divine purpose of re-

demption, that we have already seen in the opening chapters of Genesis. When the story lies side by side with the Isdubar Epic, and one comes to carefully compare the two, then the decisive sense in which this is a revelation begins to appear. But this does not mean that we are at liberty to press the details of the story, or to claim that *revelation* has been invoked in order to tell us the dimensions of the ark, the numbers of the animals, the duration of the flood, or the other features which had come down in the tradition. The careful analysis of the literary sources has saved us from this truly grotesque mistake by showing us that these four chapters are made up of a very skilful combination of two distinct narratives—one, the version of that Priestly Code which is by scholars designated P ; the other, the version of the Yahvist (J). When these two narratives are distinguished, as they easily may be by a little careful study,[1] it is found that, according to P, two animals of each kind, a male and a female, were saved, while J says, that of the clean beasts

[1] Let the reader underline in his Bible (R.V.) the following passages, which are from J :—chap. vi. 1–8 ; vii. 1–5, 7–10 (with the exception of the clause contained in ver. 9), 12, 16 (from "and the Lord," &c.), 17, 22, 23 ; viii. 2 (beginning "and the rain," &c.), 3 (to "continually"), 6–12, 13 ("and Noah . . . ground was dried"), 20–22 ; ix. 18–27. And then let him read the parts which are not underlined from P, and he will quickly see the cogency of the statement made in the text.

seven of each kind were taken into the ark. Again, according to P, the duration of the flood, or at any rate the residence in the ark, was a whole year, (vii. 11 and viii. 14), while J speaks definitely of the flood lasting forty days, and of two periods of seven days during which the waters abated and the ground became dry. There is something quite sad in remembering how much ingenuity has been spent on trying to make the Holy Spirit responsible for the details of a narrative like this, when a careful study of the Hebrew original could so easily show that the writer himself had two versions of the story before him; and also when the real elements of Revelation—the direct and actual work of the Spirit—are so evident and so independent of the mere traditional materials which were employed.

Four, the *Origins of the Sons of Noah.* In the most interesting table of the nations, which constitutes chap. x., there is certainly no theological or religious end to be served by asserting that the names are given by a direct revelation from God, and not by the ordinary methods of historical tradition. Nothing but the unnatural methods of an erroneous theory of inspiration could have led men into the absurdity of maintaining that here we have an exhaustive account of the various families of the human race. Such a contention gives at once a

point of attack for the philologist and the ethnologist, invites their criticism, and provokes their condemnation. If we approach this chapter, however, with no presupposition, and no theory to maintain, we find, along with many students of our own day, that this fragmentary account of the various races included in a circle, the centre of which is placed at the junction of the Tigris and Euphrates, and the circumference of which sweeps round Persia, Asia Minor, Ionia, and the more distant parts of the Mediterranean, Egypt, and Arabia, is among the most valuable sources of the kind that ethnologists have at their disposal. It is, we have every reason to believe, thoroughly trustworthy. It has been pronounced by Dillmann "an unquestionable historical, geographical monument," though it covers only the Caucasian race in Blumenbach's division of the human family into the Caucasian, Mongolian, Malayan, American, and Ethiopian, and omits even those original stocks in Palestine, the Amalekites, Rephaim, Emim, and Zûzim, which would have been, we might have thought, within the purview of the writer. To claim for this list the authority of revelation is to obscure and to destroy its unquestioned authority as a fragment of ethnographical and historical information.

Passing on to the account of Babel in the opening

verses of chap. xi., we may content ourselves with quoting an illustrative passage from an Assyrian tablet concerning—so Professor Sayce believes—the Tower of Babel. It is speaking of a leader of rebellion who, when "the thought of his heart was hostile, . . . had wronged the father of all the gods." He hurried to seize Babylon, and his host were "*mingling* the mound when the divine king of the illustrious mound, Anu, lifted up . . . in front, and prayed to his father, the lord of the firmament." "In his wrath he overthrows their secret counsel; in his fury he set his face to *mingle* their designs, he gave command, he made strange their plan."[1] The word "mingle," italicised in this quotation, is the very word in Assyrian which is rendered "confound" in Gen. xi. 9. Once again the Babylonian version of a story stands side by side with the Biblical to remind us how far the two agree, where they differ, and to enable us to perceive in what sense we are to regard the Biblical narrative as a revelation.

Five, the *Origins of Shem.* In following the brief genealogical tree up to Terah, there are two observations to be made which may help us to conceive more clearly the limits which must be put to finding revelation in every detail of the record. The LXX. insert another name in the list at ver. 12. "Arphach-

[1] Sayce, *Hibbert Lecture*, p. 406.

sad lived five and thirty years, and begat Kainan: and Arphachsad lived after he begat Kainan four hundred years, and begat sons and daughters, and died. And Kainan lived one hundred and thirty years, and begat Shelah," &c. St. Luke in his genealogy (iii. 36) follows the LXX. We are obliged to face the question: Is the Septuagint version which St. Luke adopted the correct one, or is our Hebrew text to be accepted? It is not, of course, material to decide, but it is very important to note that we have no authority to insist on the accuracy of these details, and the attempt to do so, especially if our view of Revelation is practically bound up with this notion of unerring accuracy, must necessarily shake the faith in revelation itself. The other observation is of a kindred nature. The chronological calculations based on such numbers as occur here are of the most precarious character. The LXX. make the period between the birth of Arphachsad and the migration of Abram 1245 years; our text makes it 365 years. And yet we know that the New Testament, as a whole, follows the LXX. chronology rather than that of the Hebrew text. The difficulties connected with the agelong lives of these primitive men have led even so conservative an expositor as Delitzsch to conjecture that the whole sum of years between the Flood and Abram is

divided among the individual patriarchs as representatives of successive epochs in this period. If such a conjecture is probable, we must certainly abstain from laying stress upon what the great commentator calls this "motley jumble of numbers," and we must discard from the contents of revelation those schemes of chronology which were based on the assumed infallibility of these dates. The proofs which Geology has furnished of the remote antiquity of man on the globe do not really come into collision with Revelation, for most assuredly these figures are not *revealed*, they are simply the result of the defective methods of reckoning time which characterise all early histories, and which we have no reason to suppose that God would remedy by supernatural means.

The remaining part of the Book of Origins must necessarily be dealt with in a more cursory manner. The chosen race is henceforth disentangled from the collateral branches. The father of the faithful emerges into a clear light, and a detailed history of his life is given, though the same principle of briefly mentioning and then leaving on one side the collateral lines is still followed for a time; the Toledoth of Ishmael are hastily dismissed in order to follow Isaac's generation more particularly; and again, the Toledoth of Esau are passed rapidly over, that all

attention may be fixed upon Jacob. When the writer reaches the generations of the Twelve Tribes the purpose of the book is attained.

Is it possible for us to particularise the revelation which is contained in these incomparable narratives? Granting that the main gist of the revelation of God lies in the historical selection and preparation of Israel as a people, can we lay our hands with any certainty upon the elements of revelation contained in the several parts of the story? Can we do this without sliding into the easy but fallacious assumption, that because the revelation is in these chapters so broad and beautiful a light, therefore all the details or all the facts are guaranteed to us on an infallible authority? This is the problem before earnest Bible students of the present day. Only an outline of the answer can be attempted here.

It may be at once asserted that the work of archæologists in the past thirty years has all tended to show the historical accuracy of the pictures contained in these chapters. In the most impressive way the forgotten inscriptions of Assyria and the undeciphered papyri of Egypt came to light like a witness stepping out of the tomb to reaffirm the truthfulness of our records, just when a pitiless Biblical Criticism was disposed to resolve the names into solar myths, and the facts into idle legend. For

example, scholars have hesitated to press the historical reality of chap. xiv. In the absence of confirmatory evidence, the invasion of the West by these Mesopotamian kings seemed highly doubtful, and the mysterious appearance of Melchizedek, king of Salem, suggested an explanation other than the historical one. But the annals of Sargon of Accad, in the clay tablets of the British Museum, show that Babylonian kings made expeditions to the Mediterranean 3800 years before Christ. The name of Eri-Aku, king of Larsa, occurs on one of the bricks, and he describes himself as the son of Kudur-Mabug of Elam. This first name seems to remind us of Arioch of Ellasar, and the Kudur, meaning "servant," of the god Mabug, illustrates Chedor-laomer, or servant of the god Laomer. Still more direct is the witness of the cuneiform tablets found at Tel-el-Amarna, in Egypt, to the historical reality of Melchizedek. From them we learn that Ebed-Tob was a priest-king in Jerusalem at that early period, inheriting his dignity not from father or mother, but by the oracle of Salem, the god of peace, whose temple stood where afterwards the Temple of Jehovah was built.[1] This is certainly a highly interesting reminder that underneath this chapter of

[1] See a paper in *The Expository Times* of December, 1891, by Prof. Sayce.

Genesis lie historical traditions which must have come down from very ancient times.

Again, the decipherment of the Egyptian hieroglyphics has revealed in a most remarkable way the truthful colouring of the whole story of Joseph in Egypt. Almost every detail receives illustration from the monuments. The narrative contains Egyptian words which have only become intelligible by the recovery of this forgotten language. For instance, Mr. Le Page Renouf has suggested that Joseph's Egyptian name, Zaphnath-paaneah, would signify "Storehouse of the housé of life."[1] It has become quite plain that the two authors, the Yahvist and the Elohist, whose narratives are combined in these chapters, certainly had at their disposal authentic materials of the period about which they were writing. Such verisimilitude, such correctness of local colour, such embodiment of Egyptian words, which could not be in use—perhaps would not be intelligible—among the contemporaries of the writers, can only be explained by the existence of these authentic sources, which furnished the matter of the narratives.

There is an evidence, too, of quite another kind to

[1] A convenient and accessible summary of the confirmation given by Egyptology to the Biblical narratives is given in Mr. Budge's *Dwellers on the Nile*. (R.T.S., *Bye-Paths of Bible Knowledge*.)

the truthfulness of these narratives. It may be called a psychological evidence. The late Charles Reade once wrote some papers on Bible Characters, and showed, from the standpoint of a novelist, what miraculous truth there is in these Scriptural delineations. The supposition that Abraham, for instance, is a solar myth breaks down in face of the fact that he is a most perfectly drawn human character. Shakspere could not be more consistent than are these two writers (J and E) in the language and actions ascribed to the patriarch. Jacob is equally distinct and recognisable. Judah, the frail and sinning, but just and generous man, is a perfect portrait. His speech before Joseph in chap. xliv. is either literally true, or the work of a consummate dramatic artist. Still more remarkable is the whole presentation of Joseph. Homer has left us no such flawless picture. It is here that the recognition of separate sources, which Orthodoxy once resented as a dishonour, has become a confirmation and an evidence to Scripture. When it is quite easy to detect a double narrative coming from two quite distinct authors, who differed considerably in the details of their story, the perfectly consistent human character resulting from a combination of the two, is a clear proof that they both were speaking about a real person. One may say, on this psychological ground, if ever there was a

genuine biography in the world, this biography of Joseph is genuine.

Another most interesting evidence of genuineness occurs in the prophecy of Jacob concerning the Twelve Sons, which occurs in chap. xlix. Look at the words spoken concerning Levi and Simeon. Jacob pronounces a curse upon them, and speaks of their being scattered in Israel as a penalty of their sins. Then look at the very ancient "blessing of the tribes" in Deut. xxxiii. There Simeon is not mentioned, but Levi is recognised as the teacher of all Israel. How inconceivable it is that this prophecy of Jacob could have been composed after Levi had thus become the priestly tribe! Equally striking is the oracle about Zebulun (ver. 13), for it was a prophecy which received no fulfilment. Zebulun, as we learn from Josh. xix. 10–16 (P), did not reach the coast of the sea.[1] And thus the very failure of the prophecy is a proof of its antiquity and genuineness.

These converging proofs of the antiquity and correctness of the records on which the narratives are based give a strong historical credibility to the book. We may say, with a confidence which a few years ago would have seemed to be temerity, that we are here dealing with a trustworthy history. Now, it has

[1] Cf. Deut. xxxiii. 19, where the prophecy also points to a seaboard for Zebulun.

been already pointed out that historical trustworthiness and revelation are by no means to be confused together. In a sense they are the opposite of one another; for what is historically known and confirmed by sufficient historical proofs is so far not *revealed*. We shall not, therefore, seek the revelation of these chapters in their historical trustworthiness. There would be a good deal of recognisable revelation in them if they were merely tales that emanated from the religious consciousness of Israel. But in proportion as we are entitled to treat the story as a correct presentation of the main facts, the facts, as facts, show themselves as a true revelation. The writings are a revelation because they come from the pens of men imbued with true and vital religious ideas, but the events which lie behind the records are in themselves a revelation, and would be a revelation though it were recorded by a heathen.

For what is the gist of the facts recorded? Abram, an inhabitant of a city devoted to the worship of the Sun-god on the lower reaches of the Euphrates, is led out by the voice of God to be the father of a very peculiar and significant race. By methods which are not without their parallel in later times God *reveals Himself* to the man. No one supposes that this primitive revelation of God to the patriarch was, or could be, in any sense

complete; we must expect limitations and imperfections both in the revelation itself and in the apprehension of it. But no one who is not committed to the unproved dogma that God cannot reveal Himself to men, need doubt, or indeed can doubt, that the distinctive note of Abram's life was precisely a revelation of God to him. Following the commandments of that inner voice, Abram went out and entered a strange land, convinced that he would some day possess it, and that his remote progeny should be a divine blessing to all families of mankind. This germ of revelation and this susceptibility to Divine guidance pass on to Isaac, and from Isaac to Jacob, and from Jacob to Joseph. Nowhere is it possible to touch these narratives without eliciting a spark of revelation. God is with the men. It is the first authentic account of a walk maintained with God, or of men from generation to generation becoming the subjects of the Unseen Providence, and the instruments of the Unseen Will. While this guiding truth presides over our reading of the narratives all is instructive and full of spiritual significance; we only lose the clue when we turn aside to say that because the facts recorded are so wonderful, the record is itself infallible. Nor is this all. These lives so divinely ordered, so consciously lived in relation with God,

become in a quite startling way types and symbols of abiding spiritual things. How far they were capable of serving this purpose at the time we have no means of judging; but with the subsequent development of the kingdom of God before us we cannot fail to see the mysterious foreshadowings of the end even in the beginning. The offering of Isaac, for example, on Mount Moriah seems like a tale told to children to teach the Eternal Sacrifice of the Son of God. The experience of Jacob at Bethel and Penuel reads so much like an allegory of the Christian life, that it requires an effort to realise that the narratives date from a period which, on any supposition, is ages before the Christian era. Or, again, the story of Joseph, which is, as we have seen, a model of realism, is yet a curious prefiguration of Christ; so much so that few ways of presenting the great salvation are more effectual than that of veiling it in the matchless tale of that great saviour of his ungrateful brethren. This unmistakable symbolism of the Old Testament narratives seems to admit of but one explanation. There is a Providence that shapes our ends. The events of history do not happen at random. Where men hear the voice of God, and obey, they are led by a way which they know not, towards an end which they can only surmise, and their words and deeds

under this divine leading become, as it were, prophetic; the story of their lives is a revelation of God.

Now, to bring this chapter to an end, the Book of the Toledoth or Origins, written as it was in the late period of Hebrew history, but based on far older works, which in their turn were compiled from narratives of great antiquity, derived in many cases from contemporary records, is a revelation, because in the first place it sets the origin of the Universe and of the Human Race in the burning light of Monotheism, and knows, whatever else it is ignorant of, that God made all things, and man in His own image. But, in the next place, it is a revelation because it presents us with the origins and early developments of Israel, a people which had this distinctive mark, that it was chosen by God for a great service to the world, and knew it: thus it is in a remarkable degree the story of men who, one after another, were called and directed by God, and moved through life, not at haphazard, but following a guidance from Him who knows the end from the beginning. The story of these men is a story of revelation, and the deeds of these men have a revealing power of their own, for they point forward to the ultimate development of God's redeeming purpose for the world.

If this revelation does not seem sufficient for us, but we feel called upon to invent an unfounded dogma that the book is, as it were, written by God, or at least guaranteed against all errors, scientific, chronological, historical, or literary, we must remember the responsibility which we incur: the attacks on revelation which are made on the ground of that fictitious theory are attacks of our own creation. If, on the other hand, we will allow this Book of Genesis to be precisely what it is, without claiming for it anything more than it evidently claims for itself, we shall find that the quibbles of Infidelity will fall silent, and while historians and even scientists stand amazed before this ancient treasure, seekers after God will hail the manifest, though elementary, manifestation of Him that the book contains, with reverence and gratitude.

CHAPTER III.

THE TÔRAH OR THE LAW.

"What bard
At the height of his vision, can deem
Of God, of the world, of the soul,
With a plainness as near,
As flashing as Moses felt,
When he lay in the night by his flock
On the starlit Arabian waste?
Can arise and obey
The beck of the Spirit like him?"

MATTHEW ARNOLD, *The Future.*

IT has been too readily assumed that the work of the Higher Criticism in the Book of Moses is antagonistic to the Revelation contained in it. Orthodox believers have regarded the critics as rash and daring iconoclasts who were laying violent hands upon the Ark of the Covenant. But there is quite another way of regarding their work, and every year of calm investigation and prayerful thought brings more adherents to this other view. The conclusions of the Higher Criticism, so far as they have been reached on purely literary lines, and

not biassed by preconceived objections to a Supernatural Revelation, have tended rather to clear up the difficulties of the Pentateuch than to disturb the revealed truths contained in it. How serious those difficulties are is not perceived by those who deem it an impiety to recognise or examine any defects in the Sacred Writings; but students have long been constrained to face them, and the adversaries of the Faith have not been slow to seize them with relentless pertinacity. Now it may be still a surprise to some Christian people to learn that the Higher Criticism, so much dreaded by pious souls, is furnishing a conclusive answer to the untiring opponents of Revelation.

The object of the present chapter is, therefore, to show two things: in the first place, how the acknowledged difficulties of the Pentateuch may be met by the frank acceptance of the proved conclusions at which Criticism has arrived, and, in the second place, how the body of Revelation in *The Law* is not vitally or even seriously affected by this complete change in our way of conceiving the literary vehicle through which it has come down to us. For scholars, pure and simple, such an argument is superfluous: they are not concerned with vindicating the revelation in the books, they seek only such light as they can find upon their

structure, their origin, and their date; but very few of us are scholars, while all of us are men who need a foundation on which our religious life can rest; and the unconcern of scholarship about the questions which are so vital to the spirit, is among the reasons for that unaccountable suspicion with which the religious mind regards the scholar. For the Church as a whole, therefore, the investigation on which we are entering is far from being superfluous.

Now, to begin with, the difficulties which any student of the Pentateuch who reads with open eyes must inevitably confront are these: There is the most unexampled repetition of the same things, and there is the most inexplicable variation in the repetitions. The same laws are constantly reiterated, sometimes word for word, sometimes in different language. How, the student is forced to ask, could any author, compiling a connected code of legislation, fall into the habit of saying the same thing again and again, each time as if it had just come fresh from his authority? And yet this is a slight matter compared with the other. How could different regulations about the same things emanate from one legislator, who was, in the course of his forty years' work, establishing a religious community on the basis of a written law? If it be granted that in the course of those forty years he saw reason to

make alterations, a teacher like Moses would have corrected the previous ordinances, or in any case he would not have left them side by side in his code without any indication as to which was the final and authoritative edict.

It may seem an ungrateful task to point out in detail difficulties of this kind, and if there were no solution of them at hand the present writer would not be concerned to do so. But let any Bible reader take Exodus xx., and place it side by side with Exodus xxxiv. 14–28. In each of these passages there is a version of the Ten Commandments which were engraven on the Stone Tables. The familiar words in chap. xx. appear in chap. xxxiv., but in a very different form. Several of the commandments are identical in their main gist, but several of them are quite different, and it does not require a very acute observer to see that the version in chap. xx. is, spiritually and morally speaking, very far in advance of the version in chap. xxxiv. Bible readers for the most part only recognise this spiritualised version; and it is easy to imagine the consternation with which a Christian congregation would be seized if a clergyman read out from the communion table the Ten Commandments as they are given in the later chapter, including, "Thou shalt not offer the blood of my

sacrifice with leavened bread," and, "Thou shalt not seethe a kid in its mother's milk." And yet it is evident from xxxiv. 27, 28, that "these words, the words of the covenant, the ten commandments," were to be written upon the new tables, and from verse 1 it appears that they were the same words which were written on the first tables. Now, it is quite unnecessary to repeat the explanations and reconciliations which have been offered for these two versions of the Ten Commandments. But it must be evident that the explanation offered by the Higher Criticism is far more honouring to God and to the idea of revelation than any defence which assumes that Moses wrote both these passages and incorporated them, unreconciled, in his book. The Higher Criticism, working on lines which will be more fully explained presently, unhesitatingly declares that in these two chapters we have extracts from two different literary sources, just as in Deut. v. 6–21 we have the Ten Commandments from a third authority. Let any candid mind consider: here are the fundamental laws of a great religious system represented as coming down from God and being engraved upon tables of stone; beyond all question there are two very different versions of these laws, and a third which verbally varies considerably from either, occurring in the one Law Book; which is the

more probable, the more reverent, the more religious explanation, to say that Moses wrote them all three, or to say that they were recorded by three different authors at different periods and in different places, and afterwards combined in the *Corpus Legum* of the Nation? This is but an example. Take another instance of a different kind from the Book of Exodus. Chaps. xxv.–xxxi., containing a series of injunctions, are repeated almost word for word in chaps. xxxv.–xl., which describe the execution of the orders. The condition of these latter chapters in the LXX. suggests that when the Greek Version was made the Hebrew text was not in the form that we at present possess. And this in itself points to the conclusion that the elaborate repetition of all the details was the work of a much later hand. And can any one doubt that this is a much more probable explanation than the theory that Moses repeated himself in this unnecessary way? And is not this argument from repetition greatly strengthened by the fact that "The Law of Moses" was so simple and brief a code that it could be written upon the stones of an unhewn altar?[1]

When we pass into the third section of the Pentateuch, which the Jews call, from its opening word, וַיִּקְרָא, but we, from its contents, *Leviticus*, it

[1] Joshua viii. 32.

is almost unnecessary to go into detail. Any careful reader will observe how distinct chaps. xvii.–xxvi. are from the rest of the book, and how constantly repetitions occur. For example, look at Lev. xi. 43–45, and compare it with Lev. xx. 25. Such examples can be indefinitely multiplied. If we insist on regarding Moses as the author of the book, we put it into the hands of any opponent to declare that he was a most confused and diffuse writer; but the Higher Criticism has taught us to recognise that we have many different documents combined in the so-called "Books of Moses," and in showing us the composite character of the work it has vindicated the intelligence of Moses.

The fourth book of the Pentateuch teems with difficulties on the Orthodox supposition of its origin. A few examples may be given of the solution which criticism has offered of these difficulties. In chap. vii. we are, without any explanation, carried back a month earlier than the date which is specified in chap. i. The book opens with "the first day of the second month" (i. 1), but the day on which Moses set up the tabernacle was, according to Exod. xl. 17, the "first of the first month" (vii. 1). It may be said of course that the erection of the tabernacle had occupied the month; but that is not a solution of the difficulty, for the question is, if Moses wrote the Book

of Numbers, as a Journal—and this is the contention of those critics who resist the later origin of the Pentateuch—would he not have made the dates clear? If this trifling error were the only one of the kind little need be said, but how are we to explain the leap which is made, without a word of notice, from the third year of the Exodus to the fortieth in chap. xx. 22?[1] The only real solution is that which meets both the slight and the grave inaccuracies of date,—the Book of Numbers is a compilation of sources which are not always harmonised completely into a successfully simple narrative. We need not lay the blame on a single writer like Moses; it is the inevitable infirmity of any composition written long after the events, when minute accuracy of detail is unattainable. A more obvious instance of the need which the student feels for an explanation such as really explains, may be found by a comparison of Num. iv. 3, 23, 30, where the period of service for the Levites is fixed between the age of *thirty* and that of fifty, with Num. viii. 24, where the age is fixed differently, the inferior limit being *twenty-five*. We are told in 1 Chron. xxiii. 17, and again in 2 Chron. xxxi. 17, Ezek. iii. 8, that this limit was subsequently reduced to *twenty*, and the change is by the Chronicler referred to David. The difference between Num. iv. 3, &c.,

[1] See *Inspiration and the Bible*, p. 186 (2nd edition).

and viii. 24, is certainly most explicable on the supposition that we have a later usage, which marked a stage in a gradual change, inserted in the Pentateuch.

It would perhaps take us too far afield to examine in detail the evidence of a double narrative in the account of the spies; but a careful reader will observe that the narrative itself displays its composite character by the fact that sometimes it includes Joshua with Caleb as the bearer of a good report from the land, while sometimes it seems to imply that Caleb was alone. And a glance at Josh. xiv. 7, where Caleb is addressing Joshua, shows that according to the narrative there Caleb was certainly not thinking of Joshua as his fellow spy. The Higher Criticism here comes to our aid and clearly disentangles the account, showing that an older narrative stated that the spies started from Kadesh (xiii. 26*b*), and went as far as Hebron (ver. 22), and Caleb alone brought an encouraging report (ver. 30), while another and much later narrative said that the spies started from the wilderness of Paran (xiii. 3) and went through the whole land as far as Hamath (ver. 21), and Joshua united with Caleb in the report which he gave concerning the land (xiv. 6, &c.).[1] Immediately we recognise that we are dealing with a composite narrative all difficulties disappear, but on the supposi-

[1] Driver's *Introduction*, p. 58.

tion that Moses wrote it, we can only close our eyes to the difficulties, we cannot solve them.

A similar difficulty and a similar solution will be found in the story of the rebellion in chap. xvi. No ingenuity could explain the confusions of this story until Criticism showed that an older narrative, describing the rebellion of two Reubenites, Dathan and Abiram, and their punishment by the opening of the earth to devour them, had been combined with a later narrative of a Levite, Korah, who, according to one account, protested against the exclusive claims made by the Levites, and according to another reviled the Aaronic family for excluding the Levites as a whole from the Priesthood, and was punished by fire coming forth from the Lord and devouring him and his abettors (xvi. 35).[1]

But this example of the composite character of the Pentateuch very fitly leads us to more substantial difficulties which it is the great merit of the Higher Criticism to explain. No student of the whole Pentateuch can help seeing that in many salient features of the Tôrah there are several different strata of laws, which indicate different periods and developments in the institutions of Israel. For example, Exod. xx. 22–xxiii. 33 forms a little code by itself.

[1] Observe that in Deut. xi. 6 only Dathan and Abiram are mentioned, which indicates that the story of Korah was woven into Num. xvi. at a date subsequent to that at which Deuteronomy was written.

It is a very simple and compact set of regulations, and it is referred to in xxiv. 7 as "The Book of the Covenant." According to this primitive system "an altar of earth" might be raised in any place where the Lord should cause His name to be remembered, just as was done in patriarchal times, and just as was done in the early days of the Kings; it would seem that any Israelite might offer a sacrifice (xx. 24–26), and this is the practice actually found in the Book of Judges; nothing is said about the priests or the Levites; and finally, three feasts were appointed to be observed, feasts which connect themselves with the three points of the agricultural year: the Feast of the Unleavened Bread,[1] the Feast of the Harvest, and the Feast of the Ingathering (xxiii. 14–17).

Fixing our attention only on these regulations of the Book of the Covenant, we may observe what a different condition of things is assumed in the Book of Deuteronomy. In Deut. xii.–xxvi. we have another Code which is complete in itself. The essential feature of this Code is that there is to be *One Altar* only, and to this shall every sacrifice be brought. This second Code constantly refers to "the Priests the Levites" as a special order of officiating ministers at the Central Altar to which all Israel is to come. But still the three Annual Feasts retain something

[1] The Feast of Mazzoth was at the beginning of Barley Harvest.

of their simplicity (Deut. xvi.), though the Feast of Ingathering is now called the Feast of Booths. Few people, setting the two Codes we have just referred to side by side, can fail to remark the striking difference; it is a difference as striking as that which is to be found, in Roman Law, between the Law of the Twelve Tables and the Code of C. Julius Cæsar.

But still more amazing is the difference between the Law in Deuteronomy and that body of regulations which occupies the main bulk of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers. With the regulations of the Book of the Covenant concerning the Feasts fresh in the memory, let us turn to Lev. xxiii. and see how elaborate the institution has become; and then turn to Num. xxviii.–xxix., where the whole matter is dealt with again in even fuller detail. That we are here reading about a later usage is clear not only from this high elaboration, but also from the incidental feature of the *eighth* day added to the seven of the Feast of Booths. In Solomon's time there were still only seven days (1 Kings viii. 66); nor was it till after the Exile that this eighth day was observed (Nehem. viii. 18; 2 Chron. vii. 9).

These are but examples of facts which present themselves at every turn in the Book of the Law. Directly attention was drawn to them they demanded explanation. Virtually there were but two lines on

which an explanation could be sought. One of these lines was that of the general tradition that Moses was the author of the Pentateuch, and on this supposition many attempts have been made to defend the curious phenomenon which the book presents. But it never was possible, and never can be, to really explain the facts on this supposition without arriving at conclusions which would seriously shake the belief in Inspiration. If we are to maintain that in the course of one man's life-time all these miscellaneous and ill-arranged regulations were given by the mouth of Jehovah, with constant variations and constant repetitions so that totally different practices would be commended at one and the same time, we must not only bring a charge against Moses of confused arrangement and absolute inability to state clearly and simply what was really required, but we must suppose that God Himself proceeded in this irregular and perplexing way; and gradually but surely the idea of Revelation must be lowered to suit this contention of Orthodoxy. The other line of explanation is that which the style of criticism, inaugurated by Jean Astruc, and developed with ever-increasing certainty of results by Vatke, George, Ewald, Graf, Wellhausen, Kuenen, Driver, has put into our hands. This explanation—such is the present contention—not only meets the difficulties which a study of the

books suggests, but by clearing and strengthening our conception of Revelation, enables us to speak with greater confidence of the Inspiration of the books. In the light of this explanation the very facts which before were difficulties become the most valuable witnesses to the methods and course of God's Revelation in the Law. What is the explanation offered by the Higher Criticism?

Disregarding minor points of difference which will be settled, we may be sure, by further study, we may summarise the theory which is to be our help and guide in this way :—The six first books of our Bible—for Joshua is in a literary sense continuously joined to the rest, presenting just the same leading features as the other five—form, in the shape in which we possess them, a work which was the starting-point, not of Ancient Israel, but of the Judaism which came into existence after the return from Captivity. This work, containing the Origins of the nation and of its religious institutions, the law of its ritual and practice, and the records of the conquest and possession of the promised land, was not the product of a single age, but the slow growth of time. It contains things which were hoary with antiquity in the time of Moses, and much which was not written until a thousand years after his death. The work was very suitably called after Moses, because with him began the Law which

forms its kernel, and so reverently was the Law associated with its founder that by a practice which was more intelligible to antiquity than it is to us, every development or change in the evolving system which he started was scrupulously referred to him. An illustration, though a very imperfect one, may be found in the Early English habit of referring the body of Laws which was constantly increasing to an Alfred or an Edward the Confessor. In a word, these six books present us with the Law of Moses *full grown*, the completed Thought which had its origin in the inspired leader who led his people out of Egypt and made them a nation, but reached its maturity only after many vicissitudes of religious experience, of political shocks, and of Divine discipline.

The primitive *Tôrah*, or *Tôrōth* (תּוֹרוֹת), were probably quite simple; they were judgments given under the circumstances described in Exod. xviii. 20; they would include no doubt some clear conceptions of God and of His will, but they would consist for the most part of very practical regulations about life and property, slaves, cattle, crops, money-lending, and so on, such as are contained in the *Book of the Covenant* (Exod. xx. 22–xxiii. 33). That the body of Mosaic Law at the time of the entrance into Canaan was still comparatively small, is shown, as we saw just now, by the fact that Joshua could have it all written

on an altar of unhewn stones. In the ages after Moses, as each addition to the law or the usage of the people was made, it took its place in what we should call the Statute-book ; and the interest of the work which criticism has done is that it enables us to mark with some distinctness the stages of growth in the development of the primitive Mosaic legislation.

There are several very distinct strata, representing different periods in the national life, welded together in the Book as we possess it. The most convenient way to appreciate this fact is to put ourselves, let us say, in the position of Ezra and his fellow-workers, and to imagine in what way these inspired men dealt with the Law Book of their nation. The institutions of the Temple, the Priesthood, and the Kingship had all been suspended for nearly a century. But the spiritual leaders of the people had not been idle ; Ezekiel in particular had seen visions, and had in fancy restored the Temple and its services ; amongst other things he had been directed to separate between the Levites and the priests. If we turn to Ezek. xliv. 6–16 we see the exact point and occasion of this remarkable step. It would follow that a leader like Ezra had the task, by then made familiar to the priestly leaders of the people, of incorporating into the Law Book the last results of Revelation on the question of the Law. This final recasting of the

Mosaic System appears in those passages which form the Ground-Work of the Pentateuch. Scholars have given to this work the name of *The Priestly Code* (P). To it belongs Gen i.–ii. 3, and the stratum thus designated runs, now thicker, now thinner, all through to the end of Joshua, where Josh. xxi. 1–42 forms the last considerable piece of the document. The later part of Exodus, all Leviticus, and the legislative parts of Numbers, consist mainly of P with insertions from other sources. Here at once we get the explanation of the sharp distinction between Priests and Levites, of the important and significant Day of Atonement added to the primitive festivals, of the Jubilee Year, the Levitical cities, the Sin-offering, the special sacrifices prescribed for particular days. All these are the latest developments of the Mosaic Law, which had been gradually delivered to the people by prophet, priest, and king during the long period of national disaster, punishment, and purging. Here we get the clue to the otherwise perplexing fact that these institutions were not apparently known in the times of the monarchy, and are ignored in other parts of the Law Book.

But now steadily recognising that our Book, as we have it, is the work of the Post-Exile period, we may proceed to trace out the other constituent elements. There is a section of Leviticus (chaps. xvii.–xxvi.)

which stands by itself and bears a close resemblance to the phraseology and general spirit of Ezekiel. We may safely place this as the earliest stratum of the Priestly Code itself. But pushing back a little farther, we come upon a document which is curiously distinctive. In style and substance it constitutes a work by itself. Scholars have designated this source, from the fact that its author is responsible for the fifth book of the Pentateuch almost in its entirety, D, which stands for Deuteronomist. The same style occurs in many parts of Joshua (*e.g.*, chaps. i., xii., xxiii.) ; these parts emanate from a writer who had breathed the spirit of the Deuteronomist. Now this most beautiful and flowing section of the Pentateuch is probably the version of the Law which some inspired man was commissioned to produce in the days of Josiah, half a century before the Exile, as the medium of that king's great reformation. The supposition is that by earnest study of the Ancient Law, and by seeking the direct guidance of God, this unknown Prophet—for surely he must have been a prophet—composed this wonderful homily, putting it into the mouth of the great Lawgiver, Moses. On this supposition the very striking differences between P and D receive a clear explanation : D is the Mosaic Code in the stage of development which it had reached after the work of the great prophets in the middle of the Seventh Century B.C.

But in Deuteronomy itself there are some passages which the writer derived from an older source, notably the long section (xxxi. 14–xxxiii.[1]) which gives the Song and the Blessing of Moses. These magnificent compositions were preserved in a national history, of which large sections are incorporated into the Pentateuch. This history is a cord twined of a double thread. Many indications point to the fact that a version of the events was kept in Ephraim, or the Northern Kingdom, and another version was preserved in Judah, the Southern Kingdom. The history as we have it in these six books is sometimes from one, sometimes from the other, and often a careful compilation of the two. From the prevailing habit of the first of these documents, which generally designates God as Elohim, it has been distinguished by scholars as the *Elohist;* from the prevailing habit of the other, which generally employs the Divine name translated in our Bibles as Jehovah, it has been distinguished as the *Jehovist*, or more correctly the Yahvist; or briefly the one is called E and the other J, and the combination of the two is called JE. This complex narrative comes from the early days of the monarchy, though it does not seem possible to give it a more exact date. It was compiled somewhere between 900 and 750 B.C. It is almost un-

[1] Or more strictly, xxxi. 14–22; xxxii. 1–44; xxxiii.

necessary to say that the sources used by this Narrative are much older than the Narrative itself; and it is in this considerable stratum of the Book that we must look for those actual writings of the great Lawgiver, which doubtless formed the kernel of the Law. The *Book of the Covenant* (Exod. xx. 22–xxiii. 33) occurs in J, but it is quite possible that it was originally the composition of Moses. There is excellent reason for believing that whatever Moses actually wrote was preserved, and found its way into the earliest national compositions which are represented to us by J and E.

That this critical analysis of the Hexateuch is the final explanation of its complex phenomena no one would be rash enough to maintain. All that is here contended is that it is an explanation which tends rather to vindicate than to discredit the book. But several very earnest objections to the view just recapitulated deserve a brief notice. Two difficulties at least ought to be met by those who are making so serious a change in the traditional view of the Law. In the first place it is said that such methods of composition as have just been referred to are not distinguishable from forgery, and fix on the writers the charge of deliberate dishonesty. And in the second place it is said that if our historical sources are thus far removed from the events which they

describe, and not the work of contemporaries, they cannot be accepted as authoritative testimonies to the facts. These objections are not to be lightly dismissed, though perhaps the only sound way of meeting them is to set over against them the much more serious objections which the traditional view suggests, the confusion and the contradictions which on that view must be charged to the inspired writer, Moses. But it should be borne in mind that a *chronicle of Institutions* is not to be judged quite in the way that we should judge an ordinary historical composition. The Mosaic Law *was* expanding and developing from age to age, and those who were engaged in administering it would frequently not know in the insensible changes of usage how much was due to modification or addition. When, for example, the law of the One Altar had become admitted, and the local high places were regarded as idolatrous in the truly religious circles, the preacher of righteousness would in all good faith attribute the institution of the Central Altar to Moses; or when the great penitential idea of the Day of Atonement and the Sin-Offerings had entered deep into the heart and the practice of earnest men, a reviser of the Code would enter the *practice* of the Temple into the Law Book, and would naturally ascribe it to the same origin as the rest of

the Laws. This charge of forgery betrays a complete want of the historic sense, and, it may be added, a singularly artificial view of revelation; it assumes that God could not have revealed things to the historic community in the quiet development of ages, but could only give a real revelation by telling every detail to Moses at the beginning. At any rate those who call the writers of the Pentateuch forgers must bear the odium of the charge they make; certainly the scholars who have described the probable origin of the work would never think of bringing the charge; they are too familiar with the usages of Antiquity to thus misjudge the well-known tendency to ascribe all the developments of a growing institution to its founder.

The other objection may be frankly admitted, but we should remember that if it presents a difficulty it also to the modern mind brings a great relief. There are many narratives in the Pentateuch which are distinctly deficient in probability, and many really religious minds have rejected the book as a religious authority on this account. Take, for instance, the story in Num. xxxi.: here we are told that 12,000 Israelites slew all the males and married women of Midian, took captive 32,000 virgins, and drove off 800,000 head of cattle. Now there is, no doubt, a type of orthodoxy which believes that our Christian

faith and hope are bound up with the accuracy of this appalling act of barbarity. If this was not commanded by the Lord, some people would argue, there is no word of God given to men. But there are many more, and an ever increasing number, who, so far from feeling it necessary to prove the truth of such a narrative as this, long for some way of regarding it which will save them from believing its truth, and yet enable them to retain what is true in the book in which it occurs. Such a help is given by the very fact which is urged as an objection. Num. xxxi. is not a contemporary narrative, it occurs in a work (P) which is at the least a thousand years later than the events, and though it shows that the Priestly writer in the fierce times which followed on the Exile could conceive that such a narrative was true, it shows nothing else except the very wise and fair regulation which existed in the armies of Judaism for the distribution of spoil.

It must constantly be remembered that the *crux* of the religious problem at the present day is not how to substantiate the Divine Origin of all that is recorded in the Bible, but how to vindicate the Holy and Lovely name, the God who is revealed to us in Jesus, from things which have been, in cruder religious periods, attributed to Him. The results of the Higher Criticism have put within our hands the

means of such a vindication. The analysis of the documents, the right historical perspective, allowance for the colouring of the imagination and the obliteration of forgetfulness operating on the records of distant events, the inevitable tendency of every writer, not excluding orthodox writers of the present day, to read the religious notions of his own time into the period of which he treats, break in upon the student as a light and a relief, a genuine vindication of God's ways to men.

But it is quite time to turn from these merely critical questions to that which is the main purpose of the present chapter. We must try to apprehend that, if we take the right point of view, *the actual body of permanent revelation which is given in the Hexateuch, or let us say in the Tôrah, remains entirely unaffected by the different views of the historical origin and the historical composition of the Book.* This truth would surely have been perceived long ago but for the shock and the panic which naturally come from the proposal to change a long-cherished idea. We look at this Book as the Law Book of Judaism: no Christian supposes that its ordinances are obligatory upon us: the wildest advocate of literalism does not propose to enforce the rite of Circumcision, or the distinction between clean and unclean foods; no believer in revelation known to the author refuses to

eat hare because it is divinely prohibited in the Law. This is, then, admittedly an archaic Book, the record and chronicle of a system which has, or ought to have, passed away. It is valuable to us not as a direct guide to faith and conduct, but for very different reasons, which may be thus stated:—It is the narrative of God's dealings with a peculiar people which was called to fulfil a notable function in the history of religion; it is the manual of a religious practice imposed upon this people as the "shadow of good things to come"; it contains certain great religious truths revealed to Moses and to his successors as the foundation of an ultimate revelation which still lay in the future. Now whatever practical value may attach to these contents of the book is, in every vital sense, unaffected by the changed view that has been here presented. How great and rich the contents of the book are, the vast homiletical literature of the Christian Centuries even more than the reverent study of the Rabbis sufficiently demonstrates. A very brief exposition will furnish a guide to those who wish to carry the investigation on these lines further. The origin of the Jewish People is, whatever imperfection may exist in the historical record of it, a *revelation*, a miracle, a direct act of God. That the people sojourned in Egypt, and came out of that ancient land "with a high hand and

a stretched-out arm," is as historically certain as anything in the distant past can be. The new science of Egyptology is a running commentary on all the story of Jacob, Joseph, and Moses in Egypt. Every detail of the narrative receives independent confirmation, and the history not obscurely indicates where and under what circumstances the Exodus occurred.[1]

The very plagues which are recorded in the Book of Exodus receive a curious confirmation from a more intimate knowledge of that mysterious Land, its river, and its climate. The catastrophe at the Red Sea, preserved in the ringing songs of Israel for all after ages, is in the opinion of some Egyptologists marked by the significant silence of the Egyptian records. The details of the story which describe the wanderings in the desert and the occupation of the promised land, are given, we must remember, in the transfiguring light of fervent faith and glowing confidence in God. The facts themselves were a *revelation* of the Divine Will and Power, the record of it is an *inspiration* of the Divine Spirit, not that the details are in any sense vouched for by God, but that they are told, or rather chanted, in the enthusiasm of religious belief, and thus contain, and always must contain, the specific elements of religious

[1] This is shown in a simple and popular way by Mr. Budge in *The Dwellers on the Nile* (Bye-paths of Bible Knowledge Series).

inspiration. When we lay stress and insistence upon the accuracy of the story we are very apt to miss the point ; the point is not its accuracy, but the solid fact which lies at the foundation of it all, and the religious interpretation of which it is susceptible.

Still clearer is our view of the Revelation in the Law. We cannot, it is true, regard the Law, in the complete form in which we possess it, as given *en bloc* from Sinai ; but the Law as we possess it, the growth of many ages, is an unquestionable *revelation*. Try it by its main religious ideas, or by its specific regulations for life and conduct, and it justifies the delighted question of the Deuteronomist, "What great nation is there that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law?" (Deut. iv. 8.) The Book of the Covenant is a monument of humane legislation compared with any Code known to us of the same period. The regulations for the health of the community, if carried out to-day, would transform the unsanitary condition of our towns. The moral precepts growing purer as the ages roll, and separated by degrees from their ceremonial and unethical elements, reach in the Ten Commandments (Exod. xx.) the standard of a guide to conduct which Christians of to-day require to study and to practise.[1] And further, the more specific regulations of the Worship

[1] Cf. the Golden Rule in Lev. xix. 18 and 34.

are full of *revelation* in that peculiar sense referred to in chap. i. as the Typical.

The organisation of the Temple worship, as it was finally fixed, in the interval between the Exile and the Advent of our Lord, had become a complete and instructive Symbol. When a teacher like the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews wished to present the person and the work of Christ, it was possible for him to describe it all in terms of the ancient ritual. The lamb offered morning and evening, the priest who offered it, the High Priest who might enter into the Holy of Holies, the Mercy Seat or propitiatory within the veil, were all types, and in combination they stood for Christ. If they were removed at the coming of Christ it was only because their work was accomplished; the finger-post could be taken down when mankind had found the real Temple of God. Now, when we come to reflect, it is this typical quality of the Mosaic Institutions which both in theory and in practice is most serviceable even to-day as a vehicle of revelation: and, as every consideration which has been urged tends to show, this typical element remains unaffected by the view that is now taken of the Law and its growth. It is the Law Book as we possess it which forms such a speaking prophecy of Christ, and the fact that this Law Book only attained its present development four, instead of

fifteen, centuries before Christ, cannot possibly affect the value of this peculiar kind of revelation contained in it. The essence of the matter is not that the revelation as a whole was given to Moses, but that *the revelation was given*. The æonian process of its delivery may enhance, but it certainly cannot lessen, the wonder, the interest, and the helpfulness of it.

But now we must guard against an inference which the mere scholar is too apt to suggest, if he does not actually draw it himself. Because the revelation in the Law was not all given to Moses, it is by no means necessary to conclude that no revelation was given to him. Quite the contrary; few things may be accepted as more certain in religious history than that the man whom tradition regarded as the founder of this peculiar people was himself the recipient of a remarkable communication from God. We may go further and say that, in germ, the whole Mosaic Law was given to Moses. That Law springs from a deep conviction that the Eternal and Self-existent God had revealed Himself to Israel, elected Israel for a unique religious purpose, and charged Israel with a specific function. Moses spake with God face to face. The history of Israel may be said to demonstrate this from its first page to its last. Whether we read the version of this prophetic call and Divine Revelation which is given in the mingled narrative of JE,

Exod. iii.–vi. 1, or study the same event in the much later verson of P, Exod. vi. 2–vii. 13; whether with J we believe that the signs were wrought to convince Israel that the Lord had appeared to Moses (Exod. iv. 1), and that they immediately recognised the truth (iv. 31), or take the view of P that the signs were to convince Pharaoh (vii. 8–13), and the people would not hearken at first to their appointed deliverer (vi. 9), there is no reason to question the fact that the peculiar distinction of Moses among the children of men is that God revealed Himself to the man's mind and conscience as יהוה (Yahveh)—"I am that I am" (iii. 14 and vi. 3). Equally clear is it that this revelation was accompanied by a spiritual power which enabled Moses to lead out his people from Egypt, and in the antique sacred Mountain of Semitic worship to formulate the foundation laws and precepts of his new community. Men who, themselves incredulous of direct dealings between God and man, attribute all the belief in such dealings to illusion, will doubtless deny the revelation given to Moses; but they who by a living spiritual experience commune with God and submit to the guidance of His Spirit, will not only firmly believe that God appeared to Moses, but will be grateful for that critical and historical method of dealing with the records which brings the experience of Moses more into line with their own. They

will take up these ancient writings with the feeling that it is no part of their religious life to accept in detail all the versions of the events which the fond memories, the fervent songs, the picturesque fancies of later generations have gradually woven, but that it is an essential part of their religious faith to feel their way through the golden mists of antiquity to that marvellous origin of a people, and that glorious revelation to a man. Time and space would fail to trace all that was involved in the revelation of Yahveh to Moses. The Hexateuch, as a whole, grew out of that pregnant germ; the prophetic writings were its flower; the New Testament was its fruit. The subsequent history is the best proof how imperfect was the revelation given to Moses; it contained no hint of eternal life for the individual; it did not even establish the much later truth which goes by the name of Monotheism; it left a dangerous source of error in the imperfect distinction made between ritual and righteousness; and though some of these defects were remedied in the course of ages and have been more or less obliterated from the Law Book as it has come down to us, the whole work of the Prophets and of the Messiah is the best proof that the Law was essentially imperfect, a tutor to lead the childhood of religion to school, a tutor which could be dismissed into honourable retirement when the School of Christ was reached.

CHAPTER IV.

THE JUDGES AND THE KINGS.

"I have found David my servant; with my holy oil have I anointed him."—Ps. lxxxix. 20.

No one is concerned to deny that the labours of Criticism on the Historical Books of the Old Testament have materially modified the traditional view of them; but in the present investigation it cannot be too frequently repeated that Criticism has solved far more difficulties than it has suggested, and gives us back the books which it has handled, not only intact in themselves, but accompanied by a genuine explanation of their apparent flaws and imperfections. No reader whose mind has not been soothed into the lethargy of credulity could read the Book of Judges, for example, without many disturbing thoughts. How, he must have asked himself, is this ancient tale of blood and force and fraud and treachery to be regarded as inspired by God? Granted that the crimes recorded in the book are not entirely approved, yet

how comes it that they are not more emphatically condemned, if the writing in any sense comes from God? Or if we are to treat the events themselves rather than the narration of them as the revelation from God, what genuine light from heaven can be said to shine through the ruthless massacres, the unspiritual biographies of men professedly inspired of God, the hideous record of crime and confusion contained in the last three chapters of the book? Did we not even as children wonder how Gideon, who had received a direct revelation from God, could encourage the idolatry of the ephod? or how Samson, whose strength came from the Spirit of God, should practise immoralities? Did we not wonder whether the lie and the treachery of Jael could be as pleasing to God as it seemed to be to Deborah? And are there not innumerable unbelievers who date their repudiation of a religious faith from the uprising of these unanswered questions in their minds? Or again, are there many readers of Samuel and Kings who have not been confronted with difficulties which, on the received view of the books, admitted of no solution? Why does the narrative of Saul's anointing as king appear to waver between two different views of the monarchy, now treating the demand for a king as a rebellion against the theocracy, now implying that it was the Lord's purpose to appoint

a king from the first, as the rule of the kingdom is contemplated in the Book of Deuteronomy? (Deut. xvii. 14–20). How is it that in the story of Saul and David we find David, in 1 Sam. xvi. 18, introduced to Saul as "a mighty man of valour and a man of war," and yet, at the end of chap. xvii., Saul inquires of Abner whose son David was, as if he had never seen him before, speaks of him as "a youth" and "a stripling," and can get no information from Abner about him? And is it possible that any one has read the Book of Kings without an occasional sense of confusion? The dates do not admit of being accurately set down; we are suddenly startled by such a passage as 1 Kings xiv. 9, where the familiar formula for describing the wickedness of a king, "Thou hast done evil above all that were before thee," is addressed to Jeroboam, who was the first of his line, and indeed the first king of the separated Israel; or we are perplexed by the curious judgment passed on the several kings: all the kings of Israel are declared to have done evil, a few kings of Judah did well, but nevertheless the high places were not removed: why, we continually ask, did not these good kings who were set on the ways of the Lord remove the high places, and so rise to the standard of religious excellence which seemed to be demanded?

Now it is no part of the author to point out or to suggest the difficulties which these books present, though every one who has looked into the literature of popular Secularism will know how these difficulties are the material with which the Secularist or the Infidel is constantly working, deriving untold support in his attack by the persistent attitude of many believers who cut the knot by stoutly maintaining that the difficulties do not exist ; but the contention here made is that the work of Criticism sympathetically and frankly accepted, while it admittedly alters our way of regarding the literature, cuts at one stroke the ground from underneath those who assail the Bible from this convenient foothold. A brief exposition will probably make this clear, even to those who are not very careful students. Criticism has, in one word, revealed the nature of these historical compositions, showing approximately the materials which go to their making, and the period of their compilation ; it has traced the several strata of religious sentiment which are represented in them, and by demonstrable facts it has warned us against placing too much reliance on such things as the exactness of Chronology, or the strict sequence of events, or the minute accuracy of particular statements.

Thus, in the matter of Chronology, if you add

together the dates given in the Book of Judges, it would seem that the book covers 410 years, but in 1 Kings vi. 1 the whole period from the Exodus to the fourth year of Solomon is given as 480 years, which would leave for the Book of Judges not 410, but 349 years. One of these calculations may be right, but one must be wrong: and if one, then both may be wrong, and the conclusion of Criticism, after examining all the attempts at reconciliation, is that, in spite of the apparently definite chronological details, "an exact chronology of the period is unattainable."[1]

But it is not only in chronology that it is necessary to set limits to the accuracy of our book. The most careless reader will be struck in passing from the end of the Book of Joshua into the first chapter of Judges by the different point of view which is implied. At the end of *Joshua* the conquest of the land is regarded as virtually accomplished; at the beginning of *Judges* the main part of the conquest is yet to do. Now here Criticism comes to our help, and gives us a ready solution. The writer of Judges evidently utilised some account of the part which each Tribe took in the conquest of the land: this Tribal history carefully described how far the work was carried on, and how far the old inhabitants of the land were unsub-

[1] Driver, *Introduction*, p. 152.

duced. Now the author of the parts in the Book of Joshua which foreshorten the conquest of the land, living many generations after the events, not unnaturally treated it in general terms, very much as ordinary English Histories have been accustomed to deal with the Saxon Conquest of England ; but the Record from which Judges i. is taken is a narrative written much nearer to the time, and presents the story very much as Mr. Green's *Conquest of England* presents the similar period in English History. The wavering fortunes of the conflict are described, a contemporary light shines on the events, and it is found that the Conquest which appears foreshortened in the tract of time as a swift and decisive action was really a protracted and, at times, even a doubtful struggle. And it is interesting to note that even the Book of Joshua itself betrays frequently the existence of this other source, though the scattered notices derived from it are more or less merged in the prevailing character of the book.[1]

The stories of the Judges proper (chap. ii. 6–xvi.) are old Tribal traditions which owe their present form

[1] The reader would do well to carefully look up the following passages in Joshua, and compare them with the similar passages in Judges, noting how together they contrast with the prevailing tone of the first book: Josh. xv. 63 (in Judges i. 21 it is Benjamin, and not Judah, that failed), xvi. 10, xvii. 12, 13. See also xvii. 14–18 and xix. 47, which represent the general point of view of Judg. i. Compare also Josh. xv. 14–19 with Judg. i. 10–15, which are virtually the same passage.

to an editor who may be described as *Deuteronomic*, because he betrays always the same point of view as the Book of Deuteronomy, the same point of view, too, as the author of those later and more optimist passages in the Book of Joshua. Now, when once this literary fact is realised, a perceptible relief is given to our way of conceiving the narratives. The condition of Israel in the period that followed the conquest of Canaan was that of a barbarous and unorganised people. As we saw in the last chapter, the Law was in a very primitive stage. The influence of Moses and the revelation given to him was felt, and was operative, but we must be careful to distinguish between that solitary ray of religious light, accompanied by the very elementary Tôrōth which the great leader had left, and that highly developed and intrinsically noble Mosaic Law which was the growth of ages. If the Pentateuch had been known in Israel at the time of the Judges, the condition of things described in the book would have been impossible. The conduct of even the very best of the Judges stands condemned in the light of the completed Mosaic Law. But though Israel was as yet barbarous and ungoverned, though every man as yet did what was right in his own eyes, and there was no king, and, as the book shows, no properly organised priesthood, God was yet at work among His people,

and the Deuteronomic writer, reading the history centuries after, very properly endeavours to show how this Divine Hand was really using such savages as the Judges, such untrained and unspiritual warriors as Gideon or Samson, to accomplish the great end of moulding the people into a self-conscious and religious community.

The two narratives contained in chaps. xvii.–xxi. seem inserted in order to draw in the deepest and darkest lines the state of the people in the days before the settled monarchy and the settled priesthood. At the beginning of chap. xvii. the story seems to imply that the worship of Jehovah was as yet an idolatrous worship, readily admitting a silver image, an ephod, teraphim, and the other symbols of Semitic worship. In those days the term Levite was not apparently the name of a Tribe, but rather that of an office, for the Levite (ver. 7) is declared to be a man of Judah, and that, too, though in xviii. 30 he seems to be described as the son of Gershom and the grandson of Moses. Again, it appears, notwithstanding the statement in Josh. xix. 47, that the tribe of Dan had not yet obtained its inheritance (Judg. xviii. 1). This archaic narrative, throwing so much light on the state of Israel after Moses, and the enormous period which had to be traversed before the advanced principles of the Pentateuch could be arrived at, is all the

more significant because, as is evident from xviii. 30, it was edited and inserted in the book after 722 B.C., "the day of the captivity [lit., exile] of the land."

Chap. xix. gives a still more terrible picture of the morals and habits which prevailed in Israel at that early period. We may well hope, as ver. 30 says, that this sickening atrocity stood alone in the annals of the people, and even in the history of the world. This narrative bears all the marks of antiquity, as also does its conclusion in chap. xxi., relating the curious rape of the maidens of Shiloh to supply wives for the Benjamites, but chap. xx. is unmistakably a very late story, and it is only by realising that the writer is speaking of events in a distant past that we can understand the highly improbable figures. The 40,000 warriors of Deborah's day (Judg. v. 8) here appear as 400,000, and the Benjamites, 25,700 strong, slay in two days 40,000 of them. But in the third day's fight 25,100 Benjamites were slain, or, according to another version—for it will be noted that vers. 36*b*–46 are a duplicate of vers. 29–36*a*, and not a continuation as they appear to be in our book—18,000 men of valour fell. According to this chapter, too (ver. 47), the war of extermination was carried on to the bitter end, and all but the remnant of 600, for whom, in chap. xxi., wives had to be provided, were ruthlessly slain. All this free handling of figures is a sign of

the remoteness of the narrative from the events which are described. It reminds us afresh that we have in these historical books ancient traditions, coming down, perhaps, in a written form, perhaps orally, handled by religious writers of a far later date.

On the whole the simplest way of conceiving the element of Revelation in the Book of Judges is to regard the narrative as a tolerably correct picture of the Israel which God had called out of Egypt, the son whom He had to shape for His uses ; it shows us unflinchingly the rock whence the holy people were hewn, the hole of the pit whence they were digged (Isa. li. 1). That God should choose such a people, that He should bear with their corruptions, their cruelties, their lusts, their follies, that He should hold out His light to such darkened eyes and wait for the seeing ones to see, may be indirectly a revelation of His character and His methods of dealing with men ; but we have to carefully guard against the very common delusion, that the conceptions of God indicated in such a book as this are in any sense an authoritative delineation, or even a veritable glimpse, of Him. And when the simple truth of the matter is perceived, the idea that the Book of Judges is inspired in that sense will be maintained, not as now by the friends, but only by the enemies, of Divine Revelation.

Turning now to the book which records the foundation of the Monarchy and the real beginning of Law and Order in Israel, the book which, divided into two parts, takes its name from Samuel, the remarkable man to whom, humanly speaking, the kingship was due, we shall again find that the accurate determination of literary form and the discrimination of differing sources are no inconsiderable help in the right appreciation of what is meant by the revelation of the book. It becomes obvious to every careful reader that the book combines information from various sources, and most of the narratives consist of two or more versions of the events welded together. There is no very elaborate attempt to harmonise these versions when they disagree; and it is a constant clue to be carried in the hand during the study of the book that the writer always had to compose his narrative out of traditions which betrayed considerable variations one from another. This fact steadily borne in mind, and proved afresh by every careful perusal of the book, will save us from the too common mistake of seeking the *revelation* of the book in the accuracy of the historical facts recorded. The difficulties which the compiler had to contend with may be judged from one or two examples. In one place he found that the Philistines were subdued at

Ebenezer, and came no more within the borders of Israel during Samuel's lifetime (1 Sam. vii. 13); while in another place, which described the appointment of Saul, the Philistines had garrisons within the land (x. 5); in chap. xiii., still in the lifetime of Samuel, the Philistines effect a very formidable invasion, and at the end of that chapter it appears that Israel was practically in a state of complete bondage to them. Our author, with such a difficulty before him, sets down both the contradictory statements, and makes no attempt to reconcile them. Still more perplexing was the difficulty that two views of the Monarchy were current in Israel. The primitive view was that the king was a gift of God, a more permanent and effectual Judge, able to unite all Israel in one. This simple view is developed in chaps. ix., x. 1–16, xi., xiii., xiv. There is no Divine censure in the appointment, and the first shadow falls on the new institution with the disobedience of Saul. But long after, a different view of the matter prevailed; the rejection of Saul cast its shadow backward, and the whole movement to elect a king was regarded as a rebellion against God. This thought is developed in chap. vii. 2–17, viii., x. 17–27, xii. According to this narrative Samuel was a judge of the old Divine type—see the curious connection of his name with those of the

older judges in a speech put into his own lips, xii. 11—and the demand for a king seemed the repudiation of the truth that "the Lord your God was your king" (xii. 12). This later view seems to point to a time when the monarchy had become corrupt, and tended constantly to lead Israel away from his God. But the compiler of our book, confronted with these two different views, combines them in one narrative, and leaves them to reconcile themselves, which they seem to have done so effectually that many readers do not observe that the narrative is duplex.

In the history of David, on the other hand, and especially that part of it contained in 2 Sam. ix.–xx., we have a narrative which, by its unity and its singularly beautiful literary form, seems to show that it is practically a composition of the period just following the events which it narrates. Thus in precisely the part of the story which it is most important for us to understand, the stream of narrative flows most clearly and evenly.

On the whole this book of the origin of the kingdom may be conceived thus:—It was written in its present form not later than 700 B.C., and contains some passages—*e.g.*, Hannah's song,[1] the

[1] That the song is a later composition put by the historian into the mouth of Hannah is sufficiently evident from its concluding distich.

more recent narrative of Saul's appointment already referred to, chap. xv., and 2 Sam. vii.—which originated in the period that has been described as Deuteronomic; but the materials preserved in the book are, for the most part, more ancient, and in many cases almost contemporaneous with the events described.

Making allowances for the inevitable uncertainties of history, especially where the habits of exact chronology and accurate chronicling have not been cultivated, we may regard the events as sufficiently authenticated. It is not, however, in any exceptional correctness of the record, but in the nature of the events themselves that we are to look for the revelation in such a book as this. Israel's kingship had a Divine origin; the rejection of Saul and the election of David are alike laden with religious significance, and the traditions of these early kings contain that singular adaptation to a typical handling which has made the story of David read like a prophecy of Christ, and that of Saul seem like a symbol of the human will which has to be supplanted by Christ.

If Hannah had sung "He shall give strength unto his *king*" in those days before the monarchy was thought of, her son would hardly have felt the serious difficulty in appointing a king which our narrative records. It is probable that the thought in ver. 5 was what made this poem appear suitable in the mouth of the triumphant mother.

In the line, therefore, where the Revelation of the book is to be sought—and this is the point on which stress is here laid—the conclusions of Criticism have made, and can make, no difference at all, while they have furnished a sufficient explanation of those confusions and discrepancies which, according to former views of the composition, presented insurmountable difficulties.

If we leave aside the last four chapters of *Samuel*, which are of the nature of an appendix, we shall observe that the *Book of Kings* is a continuation of the former historical work, carrying on the narrative of the Monarchy to the time of its collapse. To this Book of Kings we now turn our attention. It is the almost unanimous opinion of scholars that the book was practically completed before the Exile—let us say about 600 B.C., and such notices as that with which the book closes, bringing the date down to the middle of the Exile, must be regarded as additions made by a subsequent editor. Here, then, in this very small compendium we have the history of Israel for four hundred years, written towards the close of the period. But for the rash claim that the work is something more than history, no competent critic would have been tempted to prove that it is something less. It is history, nothing more nor less. The writer has done his best to discover and

to state the facts; if he has failed, the history as a whole is no more invalidated than any other history is invalidated by the infirmities incident to every human composition. No sensible person will attach undue weight to these infirmities; and it is only when the essentially irreverent statement is made that God wrote this history and not man, that religion is endangered by the frank recognition of certain errors, confusions, and inconsistencies. As we recede from events they inevitably assume a different aspect; the broad features of the story become more apparent, but the details become more uncertain. A shadowy splendour gathers round the antique names, and the facts which seemed sufficiently commonplace to contemporaries are swathed in golden mists for later generations. Just as the rude simplicity of King Arthur and his court has grown, through Sir Thomas Malory, to the gorgeous pageantry and the magic numbers of *The Idyls of the King*, so the state of Solomon grows upon the imagination as it falls back into a distant past, and as political decay and national misfortunes encourage a contrast with what seems by comparison a Golden Age. But this play of the imagination does not destroy or even essentially obscure the history of a people; nay, in a certain sense it brings out the ideal elements which were too little apprehended in the mean surroundings of the

men who wrought, and of the things they did. There is a sense, for instance, in which Shakspere's plays are truer history than the Worcester or the Malmesbury Chronicles. The details which occupy a large place in the eyes of contemporaries are often immaterial, while the broad issues only appear later on. The Book of Kings is history, and should be dealt with honestly and seriously as we deal with the early chronicles of any ancient people. The writer in 1 Kings iv. 24, who, by his description of Palestine as "the region beyond the river," shows that he is writing in the Exile, is of course removed by five hundred years from the reign of Solomon, and, not unnaturally, he takes a gloomier view of Solomon's idolatries than would be taken by contemporaries, who had not yet received the lessons of Elijah, Micah, Isaiah, and Jeremiah. And this severer judgment sometimes appears in a somewhat perplexing way, as in 1 Kings iii., where the writer severely condemns "the high places" in vers. 2, 3, and yet the narrative proceeds from ver. 4 to tell how Solomon at "the great high place" received the most wonderful revelation of God. The simple fact seems to be that in what we may call the pre-Deuteronomic period the scattered sanctuaries or high places were regarded as legitimate, and this view is reflected in the main narrative of Solomon's

reign. After the reformation of Josiah all the sanctuaries except the one at Jerusalem were regarded as idolatrous, and this view runs through all the later passages of the book. It is this later view which colours the harsh judgment on the Kings of the Northern Kingdom, who *ipso facto* were dissidents from the One Altar and the One Sanctuary; and it must be borne in mind as the explanation of many comments made in the course of the narrative. This tendency to judge earlier events in the light of later convictions, this unmistakable intrusion of ideas which sprang from the great reformation of the Seventh Century B.C. into the simple records of the primitive monarchy, must be allowed for if we would read the book aright; but, when allowed for, it cannot be said to invalidate the historical value of the record. The religious ideas of 600 B.C. were the goal to which all the events were moving, and if the events are read in that newer light we ought to say that they are interpreted rather than obscured.

But granting that our book is History, we must now observe that it is history written in a special way, by a special style of chroniclers, and with a special object in view. Every Bible reader is familiar with the constant references made throughout the *Book of Kings* to the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah and of Israel. In fact, we may say that for

all detailed information about most of the reigns we are referred to those now-lost records. In a word, the writer of our book is evidently not writing a political history, for he directs his readers to these chronicles of the Royal Recorder for all purely political facts. He is rather, we may say, writing a Religious History, which touches on the kings and their doings only from the religious standpoint. It is, in a word, a history written in the Schools of the Prophets, and the compiler is, as we have seen, a man imbued with the prophetic ideas which formed the burden of Jeremiah's ministry, and gave the impulse to the reformation under King Josiah. It is in accordance with this prophetic origin of the history that the tradition of the prophet Elijah forms so large a part of the first half, and the tradition of the prophet Elisha occupies so large a place in the second half, of the book. These familiar and striking narratives preserve for us the first emergence of the *Nebiim*, or Seers, in the Israel of the Ninth Century B.C. In every line we perceive the pulsing faith and passionate reverence of those schools of religious teachers who, in the Northern Kingdom, tried to preserve and carry on the work of their great founders. This does not of course imply that all which is recorded of Elijah and Elisha is guaranteed to us as authentic by the finger of God. It would rather

show the reverse of this. As Wellhausen strikingly observes of Elijah, "In solitary grandeur did this prophet tower conspicuously over his time; legend and not history could alone preserve the memory of his figure."[1] When the writers of the Sixth Century wished to include in their history the lives of Elijah and Elisha, those commanding names of three centuries before, they were in the same position as a writer of the Seventeenth Century attempting to record the lives of St. Francis of Assisi and St. Catherine of Siena. Around the unquestionable facts of their history, and around the truly miraculous personalities, loving and wondering stories of their Divine Power and their supernatural deeds would necessarily have gathered. We may well be thankful that those writers of the Sixth Century recorded the story just as they got it from the Ninth, and did not attempt the hopeless task of rationalising, or discriminating, or explaining away. We who read the narrative in the light of the Christian faith are in a better position than even the writers of the Sixth Century B.C. to exercise a moral and spiritual discrimination without touching the integrity of the story as a whole. The fierce spirit of the Prophetic Schools which gloated over the story in 2 Kings i. is no longer ours; and we are not required

[1] *History of Israel*, p. 462.

to believe, nay, we are even required to deny, on the authority of Jesus our Saviour,[1] that this savage vindictiveness of the great prophet was in harmony with the Spirit of God, the "spirit we are of." We are not called on to accept, we are even called on to gravely question,[2] the notion that the raid of the bears on the children was God's way of gratifying the vindictiveness of Elisha (2 Kings ii. 24). We have to constantly bear in mind that this is the story of two men of God, as it struck the minds of their contemporaries, who were as yet ignorant of the Evangelic Ethics, and had not even learnt the great moral principles of the Prophets.

But when all allowance has been made for the medium through which the legends of Elijah and Elisha have come down to us, no safer ground could be occupied by those who are seeking to vindicate the Revelation in this history, than the ground of these two prophetic lives. Facing as fairly as we can the history of the monarchy which is before us in the Book of Kings, we see the little kingdom of David and Solomon fall into two separate states, which, now in friendly rivalry, and now in deadly opposition, always present a weakened and wavering front to their neighbours and to their more distant enemies. The kingdom which has its throne at Samaria is far

[1] See Luke ix. 54, *seq.* [2] See Luke xiii. 1.

more considerable than that which is centred at Jerusalem ; indeed, when an able monarch like Ahab or Jeroboam II. appeared, it became a real factor in the political life of Western Asia. Ahab, for instance, as the cuneiform inscriptions inform us, entered into alliance with Syria and fought at Karkar against the Assyrians with a force of 2,000 chariots and 10,000 infantry. But the sacred tradition of the Mosaic Law and of Jehovah who revealed Himself to Moses was in this Northern Kingdom very imperfectly kept. No inconsistency was perceived in worshipping the national god and the nature-gods of Phœnicia, at one and the same time, and with rites identically the same. When Ahab, for instance, brought to his harem the Phœnician princess, Jezebel, from Zidon, he did not hesitate to give her a chapel in the palace for the worship of her national god. And then suddenly from the wild country of Gilead appeared the man who was known by the name, "My God is Yah" (Elijah), a name which in itself was a prophetic message. In this deep and passionate heart was working the same spirit that worked in Moses : Yahveh—"I am that I am"—was to him no less than to Moses the Mighty One above all the nature forces personified in Baal or Ashtoreth, the Holy One who could not share His glory with another. Strong in this burning conviction, he

regarded the toleration of Baal worship as a fateful compromise, and spent his days in an unwearied protest which was to have far-reaching consequences. Passing in some mysterious and impressive way from the sight of man, his mantle fell on Elisha and then on those other prophets who are the great distinctive mark of Israel's life as a people. The long line of inspired men worked, by different methods, but always with one aim, to vindicate the sole claim of Yahveh, the Mighty One, the Holy One, the God of Israel, but the God also of the whole world, and the Lord of the unnumbered hosts (Sabaoth). For that Northern Kingdom the heathen forces, as our book shows, proved too strong, and in spite of the great seers who appeared among them, political strength went hand in hand with religious feebleness, and the kingdom was plunged into the irretrievable ruin of the Assyrian Conquest in the year 722 B.C. Heathens, indeed, were brought to occupy the land which had always, in spite of the religious forces at work, been essentially heathenish.

Meanwhile a curiously different fate befel the much smaller and more insignificant kingdom at Jerusalem. The national chroniclers naturally give a certain glory and importance to this little state; but, politically speaking, it is evident that it was too insignificant to be a factor in the great movements, the rise of the

Assyrian power and the sweeping campaigns of conquest, which filled the horizon of the Seventh and Sixth Centuries. But what was wanting in political importance was more than supplied by the religious development which took place at Jerusalem. As we have before observed, the progress of events is a little obscured at first by the tendency of the historian to read the thought of his own time into the earlier periods which he is describing, but the general trend of the history is unmistakable. The message of such prophets as Elijah found an echo in many hearts at Jerusalem. The reigning dynasty at Jerusalem during the two centuries from Elijah to the captivity of Samaria, if we except the reign of Athaliah, 844-838 B.C., was in the main desirous of receiving the word of the Lord, and gave a patient hearing to the prophets who appeared from time to time. Jehoshaphat and Joash, Amaziah and Uzziah, Ahaz and Hezekiah "did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord." The idea of a centralised worship was not yet accepted, and therefore the "high places" were not taken away; but in spite of many human infirmities and faults of judgment, these sovereigns were under the prophetic guidance. Then came a dark period in the history of Judah. The Northern Kingdom was no more, and the Southern Kingdom seemed to court the same terrible doom. For half a

century Manasseh led his people into sin and rebellion against God, and so stamped the mark of his infamy upon Judah that the fate of Captivity was irrevocably decreed for the nation, and it became the duty of one prophet after another to announce it. But if the punishment was the same, there was a great difference; and that difference was determined by the event which occupies so prominent a place in our history. God had not forgotten Judah; He was prepared to set another David upon the ancient throne. The grandson of Manasseh coming to the throne at the age of eight was evidently a chosen instrument in God's hand. With a sensitive zeal Josiah set about the restoration of religion. The prophet-priest Jeremiah was his contemporary, and some inspired writer whose name has perished had produced that mighty homily on the Ancient Law which we call Deuteronomy. In this great document it was urged that the people should "not do after all the things that we do here this day, every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes" (Deut. xii. 8), but the central House of the Lord at Jerusalem should become the one shrine of worship, and the scattered sanctuaries with their questionable pillars and symbols and priests should be abolished. With Divine eloquence it was contended that the Law of Moses, applied to the new time, should be revived and kept.

How strange and significant it is that this Reformation, thus powerfully advocated, and carried into effect by the royal authority, was not to avert the threatened Captivity, but was only to form a point of departure from which the Exiles might work towards a really renovated religious State. It was the tragic fate of Jeremiah, whose spirit must have breathed in all that reformation movement, still steadily to foretell the captivity of Jerusalem, and to dissuade her feeble kings who succeeded Josiah from seeking to avert the Divine doom.

It is in this strange and unexampled course of events from the time of the occupation of Canaan by the fugitive children of Israel to the day of their expulsion from the land in the successive captivities of Assyria and Babylon, that we must seek that which we call Revelation. It is a stirring and pathetic story stretching over six hundred years ; it is the making of a nation which had to play a unique part in the religious training of the world. It was indeed a poor and misleading notion which turned men's attention from this revelation in history to a minute and pettifogging defence of the literary channel through which the main facts have been preserved. There is something which might almost raise a smile in the sight of earnest religious men seeking to vindicate the inerrant accuracy of contradictory statements and

the infallible certainty of events which, if not impossible, are certainly in a high degree improbable and often far from honouring to God, because it was thought that the great things of history could not be substantiated unless the writers of history were supernaturally secured against error. Such a misguided idea has never been allowed to intrude into any other department of historical inquiry, and there is something quite paradoxical in the fact that a zeal for religion should be the means of discrediting the history of religion. We can learn the history of Greece without asking that Herodotus and Thucydides should be infallible. The stories of Herodotus are often surprisingly confirmed by new discoveries, but we did not wait for this confirmation, or regard its absence as important, in using the historical materials which he presented. Thucydides is often obscure—he suffers the views of his time and his country to shape his judgment of events—he freely invents speeches for his heroes, captains, and statesmen, but his history is history, true and trustworthy in spite of these incidental drawbacks. It is the same with the history in Judges, Samuel, and Kings; the infallibility of its authors was not needed to guarantee its truth. It stands, we may say, in its own truth, and when Criticism has done its best to sift the materials and to shape the events and the course of them as

nearly as possible in accordance with what actually happened, it is the Great Fact itself, this story of God's dealings with His nation, this changing record of encouragement, of reproof, of blessing, of chastisement, this moulding of a monarchy, this rejection of it, this sending unto the people prophets, men prepared with a Divine message, to guide and to correct their rulers, this steady growth of religious ideas, as the Being of God and His mighty attributes become clearer, this shaping of all incidents and accidents to one far-off Divine event, which forms the Revelation of the History Book.

CHAPTER V.

THE ECCLESIASTICAL CHRONICLE OF JERUSALEM.

THE title at the head of this chapter is the designation which Reuss has happily given to the historical work which now comes under review. In the English Bible its parts are called, the first and second Books of Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah, but these are only four divisions of one volume. The unity is entirely unbroken by the divisions; one thought runs through the whole, one purpose is manifest on every page; and though the writer has availed himself, as we shall see, of several historical sources, and has embodied in his book extensive quotations from other authors, his own style is quite unmistakable from the beginning to the end. The Hebraist has no difficulty in identifying the writer, who, though unknown by name, is known by his work; and even an English reader paying close attention to the rendering in the Revised Version will soon begin to perceive that certain recurring phrases, certain well-defined modes

of regarding the events, certain general marks of style, make the Chronicler, if we may so call him, almost as distinct a personality as the Author of the *Epistolæ Obscurorum Virorum*, or that famous *Junius* whom all the world can recognise after the perusal of a few pages, but whom no one has succeeded in identifying.

Now if we wish to appreciate the degree and nature of Revelation conveyed through this work, we must take particular pains to mark its characteristics, to set it in its right historical connection, and to accurately define its relation to the other Old Testament literature. We are approaching a very difficult but a very interesting task. In no part of the Bible are we so smitten with amazement at the unobservant and unintelligent treatment of Scripture which alone has rendered the old theory of Inspiration and Revelation possible for thinking men.

To begin with, the period covered by these eighty pages in the Oxford Bible is enormous. Its genealogies rapidly traverse the space from Adam to David. With David the dry lists of names pass into a narrative, more or less full, of the Davidic monarchy. When that monarchy dolefully terminates in the exile, the seventy years of suspended national life are passed over in a clause (2 Chron. xxxvi. 21*b*), and immediately the story of the return from Babylon

begins. The first return under Zerubbabel (B.C. 536) is described; then we rapidly go to the mission of Ezra seventy-eight years later (B.C. 458), and the two visits of Nehemiah (B.C. 444 and 432). But this is by no means the latest date mentioned in the book. The High Priest Jaddua (Neh. xii. 11) brings us down to the date B.C. 351–331; and the genealogy of Zerubbabel's family followed out for six generations in 1 Chron. iii. 17–24 may imply a later date still.[1]

Here we have, then, a historical work, composed in the Fourth Century B.C., about the time when Philip of Macedon and his greater son Alexander were the leading powers in the world, and sketching a special line of historical development from the earliest time to 432 B.C. In the time of the writer the *terminus a quo* was far back in antiquity, and even the *terminus ad quem* was already a century old. We have to do with an author who is reviewing the history of the people to whom he belonged in the time of the Restoration, when the Jewish Church was already an accomplished fact, a completed institution. Bearing this point in mind, we begin to understand the scope of the work. Writing in Jerusalem, under the shadow of the new Temple, surrounded by all the practices and the ideas of that fully-developed Tôrah, which in the chapter on the Tôrah was called

[1] Driver's *Introduction*, p. 486.

The Priestly Code, the author, not unnaturally, regards all the events of the past as leading up by inevitable steps to the condition of things which he sees around him. He writes no longer the history of Israel, such as we have seen in the older history book, but the history of *Judaism*. Here for the first time the Jew, as distinct from the Hebrew or the Israelite, emerges on the field of history. For this writer, accordingly, that Northern Kingdom, the Israel of the Book of Kings, the Ephraim of the Prophets, the "House of Omri" of the Assyrian Inscriptions, the powerful secular state, has no existence: in his view of history it is quietly ignored. Everything centres in Jerusalem and in the house of David. And not only so, but, in the history of Judah itself, the all-important matter is the Temple and its ordinances. Compare, for example, the description of the king's palace in 1 Kings vii. 1–12 with the brief and incidental allusion to it in 2 Chron. ii. 1: "Now Solomon purposed to build an house for the name of the Lord, *and an house for his kingdom*." For the Chronicler the kingship itself has disappeared, and the theocracy of a developed priesthood has taken its place. In the eyes of the Chronicler this priesthood, though a comparatively late development in the form in which he knew it, has already acquired the appearance of an unbroken and an unchanged

continuity from Aaron downwards. In 1 Chron. vi. 1–15 he gives the pedigree of the high priests from Aaron, as it was kept in the priestly circles at Jerusalem. The pedigree includes several names which do not occur in the older history, and, on the other hand, that famous line which held the priesthood in the days of the early monarchy, Eli, Phinehas, Ahitub, Ahimelech, Abiathar, is passed over.

Now this standpoint of the writer, and his prevailing thought in writing, should be firmly emphasised and patiently realised, in order to vindicate his good faith. We have to recognise considerable deviations from the facts narrated in the older books; but let it be distinctly understood that the writer is not guilty of fraud, or deliberate perversion, in making these changes; the older books were before him, and would be before his readers; he writes in accordance with his convictions; reading the thought of his own time into the past, using materials which were in his hands, side by side with those Books of Samuel and Kings which have come down to us, he states what he believed to be true: where he took a view different from the contemporary historian, he only dealt with history as Mr. Gardiner might do when, from a comparison of his materials, he deviates from the narrative of Clarendon. The only difference in this comparison is, that in the absence of the Historic

Sense, which is a modern growth, the Chronicler must be regarded as less historical than the earlier writer. Where a collision occurs we must go by the older and not by the later authority. We have sufficient evidence of the circumstances and temper of mind in which the Chronicler wrote to know that he would almost inevitably give his own subjective colouring to the facts with which he was dealing. When, for example, in the account of Solomon's relations with Hiram (1 Kings ix. 12), the older historian says that Solomon gave to Hiram twenty cities in the land of Galilee, and the Chronicler (2 Chron. viii. 2) speaks of "the cities which Hiram had given to Solomon," we are to conclude that the later author, dazzled with the glory of the great king, could not credit the story that Solomon had handed over cities in his own land to a stranger, and assumed that the transaction had been precisely the other way. We may be sure that the Chronicler wrote in perfect good faith; he stated what he believed to be in accordance with historical credibility; he may even have had some document on which he based his reversal of the older story; but we may be equally sure that the Chronicler was misled by his view of the situation. Writing seven hundred years after the events, and when that land of Galilee was no longer part of Jewish territory, and all trace of the cities

had disappeared, he was less capable of arriving at the truth in such a matter than the author of Kings, who was three centuries nearer to the events.

But before going into the differences between the Chronicler and the older work, we may try to conceive the historical materials with which he had to deal. First of all he would have before him the Political Chronicles of Israel and of Judah, which we have seen were used by the authors of the older history. Then he would have the older history itself. Every careful reader is aware that large passages are excerpted from the Books of Samuel and Kings, and inserted unchanged into the Chronicles. Further, there is a work which he refers to as "The Book of the Kings of Israel and Judah," which was not identical with our Book of Kings, but probably was a work of the same kind composed with the help of the Political Chronicles.[1] Other authorities actually referred to are "The Acts of the Kings of Israel" (2 Chron. xxxiii. 18), "The Midrash of the Book of Kings" (xxiv. 27), and the "words" of certain prophets, Samuel, Nathan, Gad, Ahijah, Iddo, Shemaiah, Jehu, Isaiah, Hozai (1 Chron. xxix. 29; 2 Chron. ix. 29, xii. 15, xiii. 22, xx. 34, xxvi. 22, xxxii. 32, xxxiii. 19). When the author comes to the Return from the Exile he has a good number of contemporary docu-

[1] 2 Chron. xvi. 11, xxv. 26, xxvii. 7, xxviii. 26, xxxii. 32, xxxv. 27, xxxvi. 8; cf. xx. 34, xxxiii. 18.

ments, some in Hebrew, some in Aramaic ; there are copies of the edicts issued by the Persian Kings, and genealogies of the people who returned and settled in the land ; but his most serviceable materials were certain memoirs written by Ezra himself, which our author employs and largely quotes in Ezra vii.–ix., and Neh. vii. 74*b*–x.,[1] and the very similar memoirs of Nehemiah which appear in Neh. i.–vii. 73*a*, xii. 27–43, xiii. 1–31.

Now where the Chronicler is traversing the same ground as our own Canonical Books of Samuel and Kings it is clearly our duty to institute a close comparison between the two narratives. No one can speak with any authority on the precise nature of accuracy in historical details through the Old Testament histories who has not been at the pains to make this comparison complete. But for our purposes a few illustrations selected from many will suffice, and perhaps they may induce readers of this book to carry out the method for themselves. The Chronicler had found in his authorities that King David made provision for the building of the Temple before he died. The older book does not mention this. But by the time of the Chronicler tradition had swelled this provision to enormous pro-

[1] At least probably; Ewald and other writers consider that this passage is Ezra's.

portions, and David is made to say, "I have prepared 100,000 talents of gold and 1,000,000 talents of silver" (1 Chron. xxii. 14). The dream has certainly grown in the shadows of gathering time. In 1 Kings x. 14 we find it mentioned with some admiration that Solomon's revenue was 666 talents of gold. So that, according to the Chronicler, David had accumulated in gold alone as much as 150 years' revenue of his far wealthier son. This is an example of a difference which appears all through the Chronicles; the numbers and sizes are considerably larger than those in the corresponding places of Samuel and Kings, and the exaggerations are easily understood when we remember the writer's point of view.

Let us turn now to an equally significant instance of another kind. First read the account of David bringing up the ark from Kirjath-jearim in 2 Sam. vi. It is a tolerably full account. The procession was a very simple affair: Uzzah perished because he put out his hand to steady the ark. This was the traditional explanation of the familiar name Perez-Uzzah in the Eighth Century B.C. But now look at the narrative in the Chronicle of the Fourth Century B.C., 1 Chron. xv.–xvi. There is a most elaborate train of Levites and Singers. It is expressly ordained that the Levites shall bear the ark, and the "breach," or Perez-Uzzah, is explained in this way: "Because

ye, the Levites, bare it not at the first, the Lord our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not according to the ordinance." David has on an ephod of fine linen, and the Psalms (cv., cvi., xcvi.), which had in the Chronicler's time but recently been composed, are put into David's mouth. It is evident that the Chronicler, full of the Temple arrangements familiar in his own day, made no question that they had existed in David's day too, and accordingly he draws an imaginary picture of this Davidic procession in the terms and colours of the Temple usage as he knew it. Thus in these two chapters he employs three words which were the product of his own time, used to express the new institutions of the Temple service.[1] When "the chosen men of Israel" of 2 Sam. vi. 1 become in 1 Chron. xiii. 2 "our brethren with whom the priests and Levites are," we may say that the change is an illustration of the truth maintained in our chapter on the Pentateuch. In David's day the priests and Levites were not yet distinguished, and they occupied a position of simplicity and insignificance which was entirely incredible to one who, like the Chronicler, was living in the time of a completed Priestly System, and under a *régime* in which

[1] These terms are—(1) מְשֹׁרְרִים, for "singers" (xv. 16); (2) מְצִלְתַּיִם, for "cymbals" (xv. 16); compare with צֶלְצָלִים, used for "cymbals" in 2 Sam. vi. 5, and (3) שֹׁעֲרִים, for "gate-keepers" of the Tabernacle or Temple (xvi. 38), none of which occurs in any book before the Exile.

the Priests were not only the highest, but indeed the only, national rulers.

A comparison between 2 Sam. xxiv. 1–25 and 1 Chron. xxi.–xxii. 2 not only illustrates afresh the Chronicler's habit of raising the figures, but also shows (xxi. 29, 30) how he feels the necessity of explaining the king's action in raising what would have been in the Chronicler's time an unauthorised altar—an action which, when 2 Sam. xxiv. was written, required no explanation, because the Deuteronomic Law was not yet in existence.

It will perhaps enable the reader to form a truer conception of the variations which occur in the two narratives if we set down two parallel passages in columns side by side, selecting a case where there are no very serious or noticeable divergences :

1 Kings v. 2–9, 11, vii. 13, 14, runs :

And Solomon sent to Hiram, saying, Thou knowest how that David my father could not build an house for the name of the Lord his God for the wars which were about him on every side, until the Lord put them under the soles of his feet. But now the Lord my God hath given me rest on every side ; there is neither adversary, nor evil occurrent. And, behold, I purpose to build an house for the name of the Lord my God, as the Lord spake unto David my father, saying, Thy son, whom I

2 Chron. ii. 3–16 runs :

And Solomon sent to Huram the king of Tyre, saying, As thou didst deal with David my father, and didst send him cedars to build him an house to dwell therein, even so deal with me. Behold, I build an house for the name of the Lord my God, to dedicate it to him, and to burn before him incense of sweet spices, and for the continual shewbread, and for the burnt offerings morning and evening, on the sabbaths, and on the new moons, and on the set feasts of the Lord our God. This

will set upon thy throne in thy room, he shall build the house for my name.

Now therefore command thou that they hew me cedar trees out of Lebanon; and my servants shall be with thy servants; and I will give thee hire for thy servants according to all that thou shalt say: for thou knowest that there is not among us any that can skill to hew timber like unto the Zidonians.

And Solomon gave Hiram twenty thousand measures of wheat for food to his household, and twenty measures of pure oil: thus gave Solomon to Hiram year by year (ver. 11).

And it came to pass, when Hiram heard the words of Solomon, that he rejoiced greatly, and said, Blessed be the Lord this day, which hath given unto David a wise son over this great people. And Hiram sent to Solomon, saying, I have heard the message is an ordinance for ever to Israel. And the house which I build is great: for great is our God above all gods. But who is able to build him an house, seeing the heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain him? who am I then, that I should build him an house, save only to burn incense before him? Now therefore send me a man cunning to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in iron, and in purple, and crimson, and blue, and that can skill to grave all manner of gravings, to be with the cunning men that are with me in Judah and in Jerusalem, whom David my father did provide. Send me also cedar trees, fir trees, and algum trees, out of Lebanon: for I know that thy servants can skill to cut timber in Lebanon; and, behold, my servants shall be with thy servants, even to prepare me timber in abundance: for the house which I am about to build shall be wonderful great. And, behold, I will give to thy servants, the hewers that cut timber, twenty thousand measures of beaten wheat, and twenty thousand measures of barley, and twenty thousand baths of wine, and twenty thousand baths of oil.

Then Huram the king of Tyre answered in writing, which he sent to Solomon, Because the Lord loveth his people, he hath made thee king over them. Huram said moreover, Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, that made heaven and earth, who hath

which thou hast sent unto me: I will do all thy desire concerning timber of cedar, and concerning timber of fir. My servants shall bring them down from Lebanon unto the sea: and I will make them into rafts to go by sea unto the place that thou shalt appoint me, and will cause them to be broken up there, and thou shalt receive them: and thou shalt accomplish my desire, in giving food for my household.

And king Solomon sent and fetched Hiram out of Tyre. He was the son of a widow woman of the tribe of Naphtali, and his father was a man of Tyre, a worker in brass (vii. 13, 14).

given to David the king a wise son, endued with discretion and understanding, that should build an house for the Lord, and an house for his kingdom. And now I have sent a cunning man, endued with understanding, of Huram my father's (marg., even Huram my father), the son of a woman of the daughters of Dan, and his father was a man of Tyre, skilful to work in gold, and in silver, in brass, in iron, in stone, and in timber, in purple, in blue, and in fine linen, and in crimson; also to grave any manner of graving, and to devise any device: that there may be a place appointed unto him with thy cunning men, and with the cunning men of my lord David thy father. Now therefore the wheat and the barley, the oil and the wine, which my lord hath spoken of, let him send unto his servants: and we will cut wood out of Lebanon, as much as thou shalt need: and we will bring it to thee in floats by sea to Joppa; and thou shalt carry it up to Jerusalem.

To this comparison, which tells its own tale, we may add that in 1 Kings v. 13 Solomon sends a levy of 30,000 men out of Israel to do the work, while the Chronicler (2 Chron. ii. 17) insists on it that these hewers of wood, &c., were *strangers*, and he gives their number exactly the same as the passage in Kings, which suggests that he purposely corrects the

impression that native-born Israelites would be employed on such corvée-work.

The student who takes the pains to set the two narratives in parallel columns throughout will quickly find light breaking in upon the problem. As he finds a quotation from the post-exilic Psalm (cxxxii. 8, 9) put into the mouth of Solomon (2 Chron. vi. 41, 42), and notes the statement of which the narrative in Kings says nothing, that "fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering" (2 Chron. vii. 1); as he finds the king of Judah, Abijam, whom the elder historian briefly condemned with the words, "He walked in all the sins of his father which he had done before him" (1 Kings xv. 3), raised by the Chronicler into a religious hero, using the most pious language, and gaining a great victory over Israel (2 Chron. xiii.); as he finds the Carites and the guards of 2 Kings xi. 4 replaced by the Levites with the injunction, "Let none come into the house of the Lord save the priests and they that minister of the Levites" (2 Chron. xxiii. 6); as he finds the much greater prominence given to the prophets [1] and to their personal relations with the Kings; and as furthermore

[1] For this action of the prophets compare the following passages with their parallels in Kings: 2 Chron. xii. 5–8, xv. 1–15, xvi. 7–10, xix. 1–3, xx. 14–17, 37*a*, xxi. 12–15, xxiv. 20, xxv. 7–9, 15 f., xxvi. 5, xxviii. 9–15. And see for a fuller explanation Driver's *Introduction*, p. 494.

he observes that all the additions to the older narrative betray, by their style and language, that they belong to the latest period of Jewish literature, he gradually reaches a conclusion which it is now our duty to formulate.

The author of this book is not attempting to write history in the sense in which we now understand that term. His work is rather what he would perhaps have called a *Midrash*.[1] That is to say, historical facts are freely handled with the purpose of pointing certain religious lessons. The value of the book must be sought not in the facts—they are given with a greater approach to accuracy in Samuel and Kings—but in the teaching which is conveyed through the facts. When we make the claim that all the details given by the Chronicler are authenticated by the Spirit of God, and are therefore to be treated as revelation, to use the inexact term, of things that had happened centuries before, but had been overlooked by previous historians, we are certainly doing our best to confuse the idea of revelation and to discredit the historical books of the Bible. Such a claim could only be advanced by some careless pietist who has never been at the trouble to carefully collate our two parallel history books. We miss the whole position if we fail to notice how the Chronicler

[1] 2 Chron. xiii. 22, xxiv. 27. Translated in R.V., "Commentary."

—in perfect good faith, but without any historic justification—reads into the story of the ancient monarchy the ideas and practices of his own time, or if we lay stress on the correctness of his description of the Passover in Hezekiah's time, which is not mentioned in the Book of Kings, or on that of Josiah's time, which in Kings is only briefly referred to. It is essential for our understanding of the book to admit that these full ceremonials are what the author saw in his own day, and not what had been in Jerusalem before the Captivity. The glowing colours and magnificent exaggerations of the wealth and military power of the early monarchy must be recognised as the fond imagination of a writer who, very naturally, conceives the great days of Israel's past in the light of what he knew of the vast empires, Babylon, Persia, or Macedonia, which were before his own eyes. The perfect good faith of the writer, on which we cannot lay too much stress, is established among other things by this, that when he comes to events which were, comparatively speaking, within his immediate purview—the return from the Captivity and the reorganisation of the Temple and its services —events not much more than a century old when he wrote; when he uses historical materials fresh and trustworthy, like the memoirs of Ezra or Nehemiah, he tells his story in a plain unvarnished way. It is idle

and foolish, therefore, to bring charges of dishonesty against a writer because, in the manner of all authors in antiquity, he felt at liberty to dress the story of bygone and ancient days in the garb and the colouring of his own surroundings and his own preconceptions.

But it may be objected, and by people whose judgment is numbed by the acceptance of an unintelligent dogma concerning Scripture frequently is objected: If we are not able to accept this Chronicle as historically correct, if the author cannot be trusted to tell us facts, how can we regard it as revelation, how can we pay any deference to anything that he says? Unhappily for many honest minds the question of revelation is entirely identified with that of historical accuracy supernaturally guaranteed against errors of fact. The disastrous result of holding such a position is that when the historical accuracy of a scriptural book is, as we have seen in this chapter, disproved by the Bible itself, the scared and illogical mind immediately throws away the belief in all revelation. Let it, therefore, be firmly and confidently stated that the Revelation contained in Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah,—the revelation, that is, in the sense that we have defined it in our present investigation,—is not affected in the least by the admissions which candour has compelled us to

make. In a word, the *Midrash* of the Chronicler derives its value from the fact that it presents the religious faith and conceptions of the Jews after the Exile, in that period of history when, according to the old notions about the Bible, our records are silent. Here we may learn what Judaism was, and what Jews believed about their own history, and how Jews were shaping their religious institutions a century after the days of Malachi. The Chronicle, as its position at the end of the Hebrew Bible indicates, is the connecting link between the Old Testament and the New. If the Chronicler had simply repeated the Books of Samuel and Kings, his work would have been useless; if his revised versions of the history are to be accepted as themselves history, we are confronted by a hopeless riddle of contradictions; but directly we perceive that his additions and emendations and his whole method of handling the ancient story throw a flood of light on the religion of the Restored Temple and the complete institutions of Judaism, we are in a position to rightly value the work.

And when our materials are thus handled in the right critical spirit, need it be said that the revelation which emerges before our eyes is of a singularly striking and wonderful character? What may be called by a Germanism the *Moses-revelation*, and

what Professor Duff[1] calls the *David-revelation*, and what may be broadly designated the Prophetic revelation, were all consummated in that Jewish Church of the Restoration, which remained as the egg out of which was to come in due time the kingdom of God, including the Church of Christ. Judaism, as distinct from Ancient Israel and its inchoate institutions and evolving history, Judaism was a Revelation from God, the highest Revelation that had been given before Christ came; and our Chronicle is the most complete and authentic document concerning Judaism which has come down to us. The passion of the Temple, the rushing enthusiasm of its services, the glory of its "priests clothed with salvation, and the saints rejoicing in goodness," the mighty ritual of Sacrifices and of Feasts, the solemn sense of God manifested in these visible ordinances, the worship, the prayer, the confession, which gathered round the sacred hill, the religion which Ezekiel was called on to preach, and which the Psalmists have clothed in glowing hymns—all this was, and still is, revelation. And it is surprising how any one who has read the Chronicle which was written in the atmosphere of that noble institution can fail to perceive the revelation contained in it. It is not too much to say that the religion of the

[1] *Old Testament Theology*, i. p. 64.

Chronicler is distinctly in advance of that which is entertained in the greater part of Christendom to-day. The Temple, the Priesthood, the sacrifices in which he gloried are nearer to the mind of God than the similar institutions which appear in the grosser forms of Christianity; and it only requires the application of that key which Christ holds in His hand to see the secret of that great religion unveiled, and to read the ideas of the Chronicler as a beautiful symbolical presentation of the faith which was to be. They who still believe that the writer is discredited because he wrote a Midrash of history instead of history pure and simple, they who deem it part of their religious faith to square the Chronicles with Samuel and Kings, will probably still labour in their hopeless and uninspiring task, but they will not gain so noble and lofty an idea of the Revelation of this book as that which dawns on the student, in his faithful acceptance of the manifest critical and historical facts.

But now, in closing the brief review which has been attempted in this and the previous chapter of the Old Testament Histories, it is desirable for us to definitely raise a most interesting question. What is it that gives a distinctive note to these records of Israel? Comparing them, for example, with the story of other ancient nations, with the narratives of Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon, or with those of Poly-

bius, Livy, and Tacitus, what is this difference which is so seldom defined and yet is so perfectly plain? The Hellenic writer is not less patriotic, and he is even less ready to narrate the shady parts of his people's history; the Roman writer is not less enthusiastic in tracing the origins of his Eternal City, nor is he less faithful in lashing the vices of the Empire and denouncing the ruin which they portend; but Greek History and Roman History stand in very striking contrast with these writings which form the history of the Old Testament. Does the difference lie in the fact that this is religious and those are secular? But all these ancient authors are religious. Their narratives all teem with theophanies, oracles, signs, sacrifices, and manifold intercourse, in the earlier periods, between men and their gods. Does the difference, then, lie in the superior moral tone of the Israelitish history? We cannot honestly say that it does. No grosser stories are told in Herodotus than those which are narrated in Judges and Samuel. The Brasidas and Nicias of Thucydides are not less, but more, moral than David. The noblest portraits in Roman History, the Horatii, the Curii, the Fabricii, the Fabii, the Scipios, fall no whit behind the best and greatest men described in these Old Testament Books.

It is only when we press this comparison closely

and force ourselves to give an answer that we begin to see distinctly in what a very decisive sense the History of Israel is a Revelation, while the histories of other ancient peoples, which are equally true, and equally valuable in their way, neither are nor can claim to be anything of the kind; we begin to see how in the one case *men* are shown, in the other *God* is revealed. Now the full truth of this observation can only be perceived when we have studied the prophets and fitted their work into the frame of the history, and when we have caught the inspiration of the Psalms and the other Hagiographa of Israel; nay, the truth of the observation in its entirety can only be appreciated when we have considered the Christian revelation which had its root in the Jewish. But even from our present standpoint we are able to see how truly it may be said, in speaking of the history of Israel, "The Lord hath not dealt so with any nation" (Ps. cxlvii. 20). What works throughout the story like an energetic spirit, and manifests itself in spite of all the imperfections and confusions of the records, is the vivid sense that God is dealing with this people all along, and has always a definite purpose in His dealing. However incomplete the history may be, as a piece of literature, the history, as a gradual and connected development, is as complete and as finished and as striking as a Greek

statue of the golden age. Nor does this ideal completeness and its religious significance ever come out so clearly as when the critical views advocated in the present discussion are frankly accepted. Let us glance over that period of 1200 years from the Exodus and the occupation of Canaan to the definite formation of the Jewish Church; what is, in broad outline, the gist of the story?

An oppressed people is led out of Egypt by a leader who has come into a remarkable relation with God, and has learnt to apprehend the nature and being of the Invisible One as Yahveh. At the holy Mount this people acquires a sense of revelation, and under the leadership of Moses approaches the possession of their ancestral land as men who are obeying the voice of God. The process of conquering the land is slow, and the unity of the desert march is lost in the fractional interests and detailed struggles of the various clans. It is a dark period in the memory of after days. For four centuries the great truth which Moses grasped made no advance, and even seemed in danger of perishing among the confused idolatries which haunted the Phœnician seaboard. The only form of Yahveh's manifestation amongst the people was in the persons of rough and vigorous warriors, who, with little ethical principle and no spiritual life, yet conceived their feats of

prowess as a service to the God of Moses. But God had not forgotten this feeble people which He found in the wilderness, and in the last of the Judges He sent them the first of the Prophets. Samuel comes with the kind of direct inspiration from Yahveh which made Moses so commanding a figure, and succeeds under the guidance of his God in establishing a genuine kingship, which unites in one the scattered clans of Israel. A series of striking historical events, resulting in the rejection of Saul and the choice of David, shows what manner of man Yahveh would have to rule over his people. The man is morally far from an ideal character, but he has the root of the matter in him, and he carries the revelation of God a step further than Moses had done five centuries before; he believes that Yahveh is the supreme Lord over all other gods, kings, and peoples. The Ideal Unity of the Nation and the absolute Sovereignty of Yahveh are asserted and established as two related truths.

The son of David is called upon to provide for the religious cultus of his people. But unfortunately wealth and luxury unfit him for his task. Another period more distressful than that of the Judges supervenes. The nation falls asunder; the greater part of it, sinking deeper and deeper into the ways of other nations around it, trembles towards decay.

Great teachers—Elijah, Elisha, Amos—are sent to it in vain. In vain are the oracles of Hosea and Isaiah rung out in its ears. Four hundred years after David it has entirely disappeared.

Meanwhile a similar, and yet a widely different, fate is worked out for the tiny kingdom which has its centre in Jerusalem. Under the guidance of the great teachers, of whom Isaiah and Jeremiah are the best known to history, a new religious organisation is developed; a central place of worship at Jerusalem is secured, and an order of ministers, called Levites, is appointed; but, as was only too natural, the elaborated ceremonial and the Temple worship were easier of accomplishment than purity of heart and righteousness of conduct, and the great prophets perceived, each one with greater clearness than his predecessor, that Yahveh was above all Holy, and His demand was not for outward worship, but for actual goodness.

The refusal of monarch and people to accept this "word of Yahveh" brings upon them the great catastrophe of the Captivity. The monarchy is finally suppressed; the Temple and its ordinances are destroyed; the leaders of the people are carried away into Babylonia. Here, according to all human probability, would be an end of this insignificant people. How are we to account for the fact that the Captivity, instead of destroying, created the

people of God? How are we to explain the obvious fact that Babylon perished and Judaism survived? Those great men, Jeremiah and Ezekiel—perhaps we should add Second Isaiah and the author of Job—were the instruments through which the God of Israel realised His unexpected purpose. The men of the Captivity came back, purged of their ancient ideas, and bringing with them the plans of a New Jerusalem and a New Temple. Under the leadership of men like Ezra and Nehemiah and the Chronicler, the Old Law was rewritten and completed; the Old History was recast and thrown into an ideal light; the new Church, as it has been justly called, was organised and established.

The Church of the Restoration, produced and shaped by this remarkable series of events, carried in its very framework the forecast of another and a wider church which was to come, and carried in its very heart the expectation of an Anointed One who should sit on the throne of David and found a new and greater and everlasting Kingdom.

Looking steadily at the Judaism of the Third Century B.C., considering its character, its implications, its faiths, its hopes, its destiny, we can hardly fail to see the Revelation of God in the chequered course of events which led up to its establishment.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PROPHETS.

"No prophecy of Scripture is of private interpretation. For no prophecy ever came by the will of man; but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Ghost."—2 PET. i. 20, 21.

THE closing paragraphs of the last chapter have shown how necessary it is for us now to take in hand the work and the writings of the prophets. The history, as we have seen, must have been largely shaped by their activity; the completed Law Book is as much their production as the writings which go by their name; the historical books which we have just been considering not only came from the pens of prophets, but record the ministry of prophets, and show by what human agency God spoke to His people and moulded their development; now we turn to the books, which in some cases are autograph works, and in all cases bear the immediate personal stamp of the most influential of the prophets.

In no part of the Bible has the labour of modern scholarship been more fruitful than in the prophetic writings. Until the steady light of the historical spirit was turned upon the subject, and the necessity of properly placing the several utterances in their appropriate historical situations was convincingly felt, these invaluable documents were handed over to the caprice of "private interpretation," and the grand and unique ministration of the prophets was reduced to a book of riddles, allegories, and obscure oracles worthy of the tripod at Delphi or the oaks of Dodona. The editing of these documents, if we may use a very modern term, is for the most part very unsatisfactory. Whatever authority we must charge with the arrangement and distribution of the writings, whether the author himself or a later editor, the result seriously hinders the prophets from being understood. So hopeless and confusing was the method in which the Scribes preserved and interpreted their treasure of Divine words, that there is good evidence for supposing that in the days of our Lord and His Apostles it would have required a superhuman effort to understand the prophets aright. Disposed in cumbersome "rolls," with inaccurate titles, without any attempt at chronological arrangement, unelucidated by historical notes or trustworthy dates, these words of ancient prophecy were in much the same

condition as the vaticinations which the Sibyl of Cumæ wrote upon leaves, to be the sport of every wind. It will be remembered how the Evangelist attributes to Jeremiah a saying which occurs in our Book of Zechariah,[1] which may quite possibly mean that in the Roll which he had been accustomed to read the prophecy, Zech. ix.–xi., xiii. 7–9, a passage certainly not Zechariah's, was included among the works of Jeremiah. It will be remembered, elsewhere also, how the Evangelists, especially Matthew, make quotations from the Prophets which show that they had little or no acquaintance with the context or the original significance of the prophetic books. The reader of the English Bible is at this advantage as compared with the Evangelists, that he has the writings in a compact form and furnished with abundant references; but the English reader is still at a great disadvantage as compared with even a moderate scholar who has learnt the elementary facts of the imperfect way in which the ancient writings were edited by the men who are in the Talmud called The Great Synagogue. The intricate confusion of the Prophetic Books, which criticism has had to disentangle, must now be briefly described before we try to read the revelation of these inspired Seers.

[1] Matt. xxvii. 9; Zech. xi. 12, 13.

To begin with, there is hardly any attempt to arrange the books in a right chronological order. In the Hebrew Canon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel seem to be placed first as the greater prophets, because the books which bear their names are the longest: *Daniel* is not reckoned among the Prophets at all, but among the *Kethubim*, or miscellaneous writings, possibly because of its later date; and all the other prophetical writings are treated as one work, massed together without much concern for order or connection. But the very first condition of understanding the work of the prophets is to properly date them and see them in their appropriate historical circumstances, and the second condition is to put them in their right order so that the progress of the Divine Word in their ministrations may be appreciated.

Yet in stating this broad fact of ill-arrangement we have only touched the border of the faulty editing. There was evidently no criterion for determining the authorship of individual prophecies, and in cases where a prophecy did not contain the name of the prophet it was sometimes attached to the Roll of some other prophet without any indication that a break occurred. The most familiar instance of this is in the Book of Isaiah, where to the work of a great Eighth Century Prophet is added a wonderful anony-

mous Prophecy which dates from the middle of the Sixth Century. Another, though less recognised, example of the same confusion occurs in Zechariah, where to the eight chapters of the prophet's own are added six other chapters which bear the marks both of an earlier and of a later period, but certainly do not belong to Zechariah.

Nor when we have detected this confusion have we by any means reached the end. Except in a few cases where the prophet seems to have edited his own book, the writings which come from one author are frequently arranged in the most provoking order. The Book of Jeremiah is the most flagrant example of this chronological inexactness. The writing of the book is fixed in the fifth year of Jehoiakim (604 B.C.). But chap. x. 1–16 presents the situation of the exiles in Babylon some years later, and must, therefore, if it is Jeremiah's at all, be inserted from a subsequent collection of prophecies. Again, chap. xxi. 1–10 suddenly passes to the year 587 B.C. Chap. xxv. reverts to 604 B.C. Chap. xxvi. carries us back to 608 B.C. Chaps. xxvii.–xxix. pass forward to the year of the Captivity, 597 B.C. Chap. xlv. refers to a date (604 B.C.) long before chap. xliv. Then chaps. l. and li. are evidently a later composition, written just before the return from the Exile (538 B.C.), and added to the Book of Jeremiah because of its con-

nection with Jeremiah's message to the exiles[1] (li. 59–64).

Evidently it was necessary, before any correct appreciation of the prophetic work could be possible, to attempt some careful editing; and this the scholars of our own day have been doing, with the result that the prophets live before our eyes. The utterances which seemed to be obscure become plain when their historical setting is recovered. A new and wonderful conception of the men and their work has been obtained; and if it is necessary to relinquish the old semi-pagan idea of their inspiration, it has been found still more necessary to recognise in them an inspiration which is quite unique. There is nothing in any nation or any age parallel to this prophetic ministry among the chosen people. As we distinctly define what that ministry was, as we carefully trace the moral and spiritual forces that worked in it, and the religious truths which were manifested through it, and as we set this amazing phenomenon in contrast with more or less similar phenomena in other religions, we cannot remain in much doubt that here indeed was Revelation; nor will it be very difficult to define the character, the quality, and the limitations of the Revelation which is admitted.

[1] Driver, *Introduction*, p. 252, who expressly attributes the passage to a disciple of Jeremiah's, and vindicates its character as a genuine prophecy.

Before we approach this task, however, we may remind ourselves that here in the writings of the prophets, if anywhere, we may expect to come across the true nature of Inspiration. There is a kind of autograph authenticity about the books which was quite wanting in the Law and the Histories. The prophets show us their own inner life, and allow us to see in what way the Spirit of the Lord came upon them; they describe to us visions which they actually saw; they do not hesitate to display the tumult of feeling and the burning of thought which must result from a conscious contact with God. The word of the Lord comes to them; and often with reluctance and agonising protest they are compelled to utter it. No men that ever lived are more human than these prophets, but no men ever spoke such superhuman things. While the books were in obscurity, and for English readers not intelligible, the humanity and the Divine Inspiration of the men were alike missed; but such works as Professor Robertson Smith's *Prophets of Israel*, Professor Driver's *Isaiah*, and Professor Duff's enthusiastic book on *Old Testament Theology* have put within the reach of ordinary readers the best results of an earnest and conscientious scholarship, and it is our own fault if we do not see the Prophets very much as they were seen by their contemporaries, and if we do not rightly interpret

their utterances in the light of the facts which were around them, and in the further light of the great events which came after them.

We may now proceed to group the prophetic writings, not according to the unintelligent order of our Canon, but on a principle of chronological and historical arrangement; and as we form the groups we may estimate the substance and the nature of the Revelation which these great men were enabled to give to their fellows. Broadly speaking, the prophetic writings fall into three groups:—1. There are the utterances before the Exile of the Northern Kingdom, and those which followed on that disaster, but preceded the similar punishment of Judah. 2. There are the utterances which denounced and interpreted the Babylonian Captivity of Judah, and then prepared the exiles for their restoration to Jerusalem. 3. There are the utterances of the men who directed the restoration, and the scattered voices of spiritual teachers in those centuries of waiting when the disappointment of the restored community gradually shaped the expectation of the Messiah. To these groups we may attach three general definitions of time. Group I. falls between 760 and 700 B.C. Group II. falls between 660 and 540 B.C. Group III. falls within the century 520-420 B.C.; though if we are to include Daniel among the prophets, and to take note of some

indications in the latter part of Zechariah, we may say that the scattered voices of this last period occur at intervals down to 167 B.C. We first have a period of Sixty Years, during which the noblest of Hebrew prophets laboured and spoke. Then we have a period of One Hundred and Twenty Years, during which the highest spiritual truths were gained by men in themselves not quite so interesting. Finally we have a period in which prophecy has become prosaic, and the spiritual enlargement seems arrested; but, as in the dark hour before the dawn, the expectation of the great Day is cherished and defined. The first period is predominantly political, the second is predominantly ecclesiastical, the third is marked by an indistinct conviction that hope lies not along political or ecclesiastical lines, but in the advent of a new Spiritual Power.

Let us approach these groups in succession. *First Period*, 760–700 B.C. Professor Duff has admirably depicted the interest of this period in the history of the world. It was the time when the Greeks began to chronicle their national life by Olympiads, and when the mythical builders of Rome were laying the foundations of the Eternal City. In the kingdom which had its throne in Samaria, Jeroboam II. had carried his people to a culminating point of material prosperity, while in the poor and insignificant moun-

tain princedom of Judah the reign of Uzziah had brought some sense of peace and security. Amos and his younger contemporary, Hosea, were charged with a message to Israel ; Isaiah, the man of the city and the court, and Micah, the man of the countryside, were entrusted with a ministry to Judah. The message of Amos, the herdsman of Tekoah (760-746 B.C.), may be summed up in a sentence--God is righteous, therefore man must be righteous. The true Israel, he preached, were the good. The salvation he promised was the destruction of the bad, and the restoration of the good. The revelation of Amos lies in the identification of God with goodness, which is a truth only to be derived from God Himself; and familiar as it has become to us, we must remember that to the other acknowledged religions of antiquity it remained always unknown or unrecognised. Hosea, whose prophetic activity follows on the death of Jeroboam II. (746 B.C.), reiterated the denunciation of judgment on Sinful Samaria, but notwithstanding the disjointed character of the book, which is more like a collection of prophetic texts than a report of connected discourses, it is very clear that the God revealed in this prophet is one whom men may love. "I am God, and not man, I will not return to destroy," is the new beautiful message. We are brought face to face with a Divine Being who pleads with His people as an

injured husband might plead with an offending wife whom he loves. Such a moving appeal to sinners, such a call to repentance, such a passion of yearning and love, such a promise of resurrection, as occur in the closing chapters of the book, remain for ever as a picture of God which it is difficult to surpass. If Amos said, God is righteousness, Hosea said, He is grace.

While we thought that the Pentateuch had been written by Moses, we could never understand the startling revelation contained in these two Prophets, a revelation which indeed contributed to the making of the Pentateuch. The Tôrah to Amos [1] and to Hosea [2] was a simple moral law, and not an elaborate ceremonial or a developed Theology. Amos had come to see that Yahveh was the God of other nations besides Israel, but he probably had no theory of monotheism ; and Hosea, so far from understanding the view of idolatry which prevails in the completed Law, regarded it as a terrible punishment to be without the pillars and the teraphim, the symbols of religious worship which in the next century became the object of severe condemnation.[3] The recovered understanding of the Hebrew literature has enabled us to appreciate the real revelation in these prophets without stumbling at those blind spots in their vision

[1] v. 21–24. [2] iv. 6, vi. 6, viii. 1, 12. [3] Hosea iii. 4.

that prevented them from seeing things which yet remained unrevealed.

Meanwhile two prophets were beginning their work in Judah whose names are imperishable as their utterances, the poet-preacher, Isaiah[1] (740–701 B.C.), and the earnest moralist, Micah (730–697 B.C.), in whose book occurs one of the loftiest passages in the whole range of inspiration, chaps. vi. and vii.[2] Isaiah's ministry was an earnest wrestle with the political problems of his time. The vision of God came to him as a boy; and in the strength of that great revelation he was required to shape the counsels of the weak prince Ahaz, and of his nobler successor, Hezekiah. It was a critical period. Threatened first by a combination of Israel and Syria, and afterwards by the invasion of the Assyrian Kings who swept the Northern Kingdom into captivity, the petty mountain-state of Judah had to be encouraged to hope in God and to prepare

[1] In what follows the position is frankly accepted that the actual utterances of Isaiah can only be found in chaps. i.–xii., xiv. 24–xxiii., xxviii.–xxxiii., xxxvii. 22–32, of the book called by his name. The revelation of the prophet Isaiah is distinguished from the revelation of the *Book of Isaiah*. But it must be distinctly understood that in the opinion of the present writer these critical conclusions arrived at on historical or literary grounds, so far from lessening the *Revelation* of the book, have brought it into a clearer light by restoring the perspective and adding the appropriate colouring.

[2] Ewald attributed chaps. vi. and vii. to another author writing in Manasseh's reign; but later scholars have very justly pointed out that Micah may easily have lived to write this magnificent passage, even assuming the latest date to which it can fairly be attributed.

to fulfil her great destiny. The Holy One of Israel was manifested to the prophet in the Sanctuary at Jerusalem, and it became his function to declare that Zion should not only escape the threatened invasion, but, conscious of a present God, Immanuel, should be the centre and pledge of a purified religious life. No poet has ever sung in more beautiful language the promise of a better time to be than this prophet of Jerusalem in those days of peril and foreboding. If we to-day wish to conceive a new heaven and a new earth we turn instinctively to those thrilling descriptions of a true religion, and a righteous ruler, and the whole pacified world gathering around one sacred place.[1] If this firm conviction of the prophet's was not an inspiration given by that God who was to him so near a presence and so dear a friend, we shall seek for inspiration in vain; and if the reader of Isaiah's writings does not become aware how the revelation of God involves the revelation of moral duty for man, no words can make it plain to him. The Being who is revealed in the prophecies of Isaiah is essentially the Being whom Christians worship with one limitation only, that He is intimately associated with the Sanctuary and the Solemnities on Mount Zion, and is not yet recognised in the width of His spiritual manifestations.

[1] See Isa. ii. 2–4, iv. 2–6, ix. 1–7, xi. 1–10, xvi. 4*b*, 5, xxix. 18, xxx. 21–26, xxxii. 1–8, 15–18, xxxiii. 5, 20. (Driver, *Introduction*, p. 216.)

We should indeed be captious and ungrateful if with this real and lovely revelation in our hands we complained that Isaiah was not endowed with an infallible knowledge of the future, that in some respects his forecasts were falsified by the events, and that even in the great matter of Zion's inviolability it became the duty of subsequent prophets to reverse the hope which his rapturous eulogies had inspired. He did not know the extraordinary vitality of the city of Damascus when he uttered the oracle in chap. xvii. 1. He appears to have underestimated the usefulness of Egypt.[1] And that noble thought of an Egypt united with Assyria in worship, and forming, with Israel as the third, a great people of God (xix. 23, 24), was not destined to be fulfilled in a literal sense; for Assyria long ago perished from the earth without entering into the heritage.

The prophet Micah affords a very favourable illustration both of the nature and of the limits of the prophetic revelations. His general line of thought is essentially the same as Isaiah's; he utters from the standpoint of the people what Isaiah expresses from the standpoint of the statesman. Micah, like Amos and Hosea, in the early days of his ministry (730 B.C.), foretold the downfall of Samaria, which he seems to have regarded as a schismatic sanctuary (Micah i. 5),

[1] Duff, *Old Testament Theology*, p. 223.

but he also saw the punishment impending over his own country (ver. 9), and so far diverged from Isaiah as to regard the sanctuary at Jerusalem as an offence against God, corrupt like Samaria.[1] But he, like Isaiah, quotes the prophecy which foretold the ultimate restoration of Zion (Micah iv. 1–3 ; cf. Isa. ii. 2–4), and announced a Divine Ruler who should be a defence against the Assyrian (vers. 2–5). Under this new David he believed the golden age of his country and his faith would dawn. With a passion which moves even us, who read his words only in an English garb, he denounces the moral evils of the existing nobles, the rulers of Israel (chap. iii.), and he seems to complete the teaching of the two prophets of the Northern Kingdom who identified religion with moral integrity, and taught the world to regard God as the righteous One demanding righteousness.

Now it is this intensity, this insight, of Micah's faith, which causes the astonishment of the modern reader in finding that this prophet had not yet risen to the conception which we call Monotheism. It seems that to Micah God was only revealed as the supreme sovereign of the gods, the *Holy One of Israel*, whom an Israelite was bound to treat as the God of the nations and of the earth, but not to

[1] Micah i. 5. It would seem that the LXX. read חַטּאת for בָּמוֹת: "What is the sin of Judah? is it not Jerusalem?"

the exclusion of other deities. Micah closes one of his loftiest utterances with the forecast—

> "All the peoples will walk, every one in the name of his god,
> And we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever" (iv. 5).

We could scarcely have a more instructive reminder of the gradual progress of Revelation. The greatest minds of the Eighth Century B.C. had not yet perceived what is familiar to every child "in the kingdom of heaven," even to those lapsed children of the kingdom, the followers of Mohammed, that there is but One God, and that Yahveh of Israel is indeed the Supreme and Only One. It is not even quite clear that Micah entertained that dislike of the images and the pillars and the Asherim which is manifest in the completed Tôrah; the tone of chap. v. 10–15,[1] and the way in which the cities and strongholds are coupled with the symbols of worship, would suggest that Micah regarded the destruction of them rather as a punishment to be endured than as a purification to be welcomed.

But perhaps the clearest idea of the limitation of the prophetic revelation, as compared with the complete revelation of the Gospel, may be obtained by a comparison of the magnificent passage in Micah vi. 1–8, with the answer which St. Paul would give to the

[1] Cf. Hosea iii. 4.

question, What does God require of us? Micah was able to see that the sacrifice of animals and libations of oil could not propitiate God, and he could reject the barbarous Semitic notion that the offering of the firstborn child would purchase the pardon of the parents' sin: he could grasp the noble conception that only moral goodness, justice, mercy, and a humble piety, could really be acceptable to God. But as yet it had not dawned upon even the most inspired of prophets that God not only demanded these virtues, but would in His grace create them in the hearts of His people through a living faith in His Son, Christ Jesus. Isaiah and Micah are so truly great, and the revelation which they brought to their own day was so wonderful and startling, that we are apt to overlook the comparatively low place which they occupy in the progress of God's revelation: they stand but half way up the golden stair which scales the heights of the Kingdom of Heaven. The refusal to recognise their mistakes and their limitations is one of the main hindrances to understanding the work of Him, who fulfilled the Law and the Prophets by realising and completing their imperfect conceptions.

Second Period, 660–540 B.C. The writings which form the Second Group of the prophets are, in the order of date, Nahum (664–607 B.C.), whose grand conception of God ruling over and punishing Nineveh

is quite Isaian in its tone, and forms a convenient transition from the prophets, whose horizon was occupied by the conquering Assyria, to those who had to deal with Babylon and the Babylonian captivity of Jerusalem; Jeremiah (626–586 B.C.), the greatest personality of this period, and Obadiah, his contemporary; Zephaniah (before 621 B.C.); Habakkuk (608–598 B.C.); Ezekiel (592–570 B.C.); and last, but in some senses most inspired of all, that great utterance which forms the second part of our Book of Isaiah (chaps. xl.–lxvi.), which we may date approximately 549–538 B.C., together with chaps. xxxiv.–xxxv., which will at any rate not be earlier than the beginning of the Captivity, and chaps. xiii.–xiv. 23, which belong to the close of the Exile, say about 549 B.C.[1]

The work of these prophets covers, and contributes to, the most crucial period of Hebrew history: the period of the great reformation under Josiah, with the promulgation of the Deuteronomic law (621 B.C.); the period of the doom which, notwithstanding the reformation, was fulfilled in the capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar (604–586 B.C.); the period of the formation of the Jewish Church in the Exile and the promise of return and restoration. The first condition of understanding the revelation which was conveyed through these inspired men is to distinctly realise the

[1] Isa. xxiv.–xxvii. must be assigned to the Third Group.

immediate object and effect of their ministry. It was their solemn task to accept the centralised Sanctuary and the purified worship of Zion which Isaiah had proclaimed, but only in order to denounce a punishment which superficial hearers of the former prophet might have hoped to see averted. Their hard lot was to appear as the enemies of their own nation; patriots who loved their country and their city with a pathetic fervour, they yet had to side with her enemies, to dissuade her kings from seeking deliverance, to make their people submit patiently to the overthrow of Jerusalem and the transportation to Babylon; and only when this doom was fulfilled were they allowed to speak comfortably to Zion, to place the term of the exile, to promise the rebuilding of the Temple, and to prepare the highway in the desert for the return. No severer burden was ever laid on His servants by the Holy One of Israel; but in the faithful fulfilment of their historic task and the brave utterance of the word which was given them to speak, they became the means of realising the highest revelation of God which could come before Christ, and they were enabled to foreshadow and announce Him with a fulness and a clearness to which there is no parallel in the earlier period.

The spirit of the time breathes in the brief oracles of Habakkuk: the Chaldean is swooping down upon

the country; yes, but the Chaldean is only in God's hand; the just shall be preserved; in times of judgment and trial this prophet has a vision of God which fills him with joy—a vision which has proved a light and revelation not to the men of that day only, but to earnest and troubled souls ever since.

Jeremiah's ministry cannot be easily summarised in a few words, but when his utterances are arranged in their right chronological order, and when the work, which was mainly of contemporary interest—the pleading with kings and people to amend their ways in order to avert the doom of Jerusalem, the denunciation of the exile, and the promise of return after seventy years—when this transitory element is subtracted, we become aware that in this prophet, who breathes the same atmosphere as the writer of Deuteronomy, this patriot-priest whose life was a continual martyrdom to duty and to God, we reach the highest stage of Old Testament religion. He, like Isaiah and his school, predicts the advent of a New David, and sees Israel becoming the real Servant of the Lord (xxx. 10); but in language of thrilling spiritual insight he passes beyond all material conceptions of an earthly kingdom, and striking a louder and a clearer note from the same chord which Hosea first set vibrating, he foretells a New Covenant, a law written in the heart, a spiritual principle working

from within and bringing the life into holy obedience to God. The whole passage (xxx.–xxxiii.) is a sublime and beautiful revelation, and by virtue of its profound moral passion and its far-reaching spiritual aspiration, it forms a specific prophecy, a forecast of that consummate religion which the Servant, the Branch, Jesus Christ, would one day introduce.

Ezekiel, notwithstanding the far greater coherence and orderliness of his book, which he seems to have arranged and edited himself, is not so immediately intelligible as Jeremiah. One of the captives carried away in the first reduction of Jerusalem (597 B.C.), from the banks of the Chebar he had to announce the certain and complete destruction of his beloved city. When this prophecy was fulfilled in 586 B.C. he won the ear of his fellow exiles, and was able to preach in the land of the Captivity the restoration of his people, while Jeremiah was still alive to predict the same event in Jerusalem or among the fugitives at Tahpanhes in Egypt. He has the same glorious gospel of cleansing as came to Jeremiah; he is even more specific than Jeremiah in promising the restoration of Ephraim as well as Judah (xxxvii. 15–28). But while he proclaims this bright future for his people with unswerving confidence, that the world may know that Yahveh is what His prophets have represented Him to be, he puzzles the modern reader

by what seems to be a certain retrogression from the high spiritual conception of the older prophet. His closing chapters are occupied with an elaborate description of the restored Temple and its ordinances. This little treatise has many points of connection with that "Law of Holiness," as it has been called, contained in Lev. xvii.–xxvi. Now, according to the traditional view of the Pentateuch and of the Israelitic religion, this phenomenon in one of the late prophets is certainly very embarrassing. But if we accept the view which is throughout assumed in these pages, the difficulty immediately disappears. The restored Community would not be able to enter upon that Spiritual heritage which Jeremiah proclaimed, until the times were fulfilled and Christ should come. It was necessary that some provision should be made for the half-millennium which must elapse before the great event. The Deuteronomic Law, though, spiritually speaking, the highest development of the Mosaic Tôrah, was not the law of a priestly community, but rather that of a theocratic monarchy, with a central Sanctuary at Jerusalem. It was necessary, therefore, that the Mosaic Law should be developed afresh in the direction of a complete Temple Ritual, to be carried out by an order of priests distinguished from the general body of Levites. Ezekiel was the inspired

instrument through whom this requisite development was accomplished. A priest himself, and well acquainted with the priestly practice before the Exile, he was called upon to define and elaborate that practice a little further; he was inspired to proclaim to the exiles: "My tabernacle shall be with them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And the nations shall know that I am the Lord that sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore" (xxxvii. 27, 28). That new sacred place at Jerusalem was to be inviolable in a way that Solomon's temple had never been (xliii. 7–9). The visions of Ezekiel on this subject, while they seem to presuppose the "Law of Holiness" in Leviticus, formed the starting-point for the fully developed system of the Temple and the Priesthood which appears in the latest stratum of the Pentateuch. It is at this point, then, of the prophetic writings, in these chapters which formerly appeared so perplexing, that we get the clearest view of the way in which the prophetic-priestly work gradually developed the original Law of Moses. And though we may justly say that no development of Judaism is so advanced as that Kingdom of God which Jeremiah, and even Isaiah, foresaw, yet we may with equal justice say that the careful definition of the Jewish Church given through

Ezekiel was an indispensable step in fulfilling that more glorious future. Judaism was necessary, and Ezekiel was its prophet.

The third great voice of the Period now under review is that which may be described as the Voice crying in the Wilderness. First of all there is the beautiful passage (Isa. xxxiv.–xxxv.) which contrasts the fate of Edom, who gloried in the fall of Zion (586 B.C.), with the splendid future of Zion herself when the ransomed of the Lord shall return to her with singing. Then, there is the great prophecy of the approaching fall of Babylon, which must have been uttered just on the eve of the return from exile (xiii. 2–xiv. 23). And then comes that great connected prophecy (xl.–lxvi.) which has enchained the imagination and moved the heart of God's people for twenty-five centuries. No one can well mistake the revelation in this mighty utterance. The restoration of Israel from Babylon to Zion is to come along a highway of holiness. With the true notes of inspiration the prophet describes at first this restored Israel as the Servant of Yahveh; but as he dips into the future he sees that the Servant is not the mixed multitude of the people, the righteous and the sinners alike; one Figure separates in the shadowy vista of the days from the people to whom He belongs; there is a Servant now who is faithful and

obedient, but He bears the marks of suffering, and it appears that the sins of His people are upon Him. He passes through unspeakable travail of soul, but His work brings forgiveness and righteousness; He not only bears the sins of His people, but He bears them away. What a wonderful utterance it is! The king of whom all previous prophets had spoken is no longer named; in his place there is this righteous, suffering, Servant of Yahveh. God is with us, then,—Immanuel—not as Isaiah supposed, in a successful monarch breaking the power of Israel's enemies, but in a son of man, marred and chastised, bearing away Israel's sins! The Infinite God, inhabiting eternity, and taking up the earth as a little thing, whose wonder and power are chanted in these chapters, in language which seems to have fallen from Heaven and to be the manner of the song before the throne, is revealed as approaching the humble and the contrite, as a Saviour that stoops to enter the heart, to bear iniquity, to revive the bruised and broken spirit.

That Jesus Christ fulfilled in His own person the more rudimentary conceptions of the earlier prophets, as the scion of the House of David, and the King of the Jews, and at the same time fulfilled this profounder and more marvellous conception of the Lord's Servant pouring out His soul unto death and numbered with the transgressors, is one of those miracles which no

criticism has been able to explain away. And, indeed, it is only when criticism has thoroughly done its work in showing the real conditions of the problem, that we adequately realise what a miracle it is. If that anonymous speaker of the Exile spoke his own words, if he was not the mouthpiece of God Himself, who alone knows the end from the beginning, and has marked out the lines of His working amongst men, how, we may well ask, and on what conceivable theory, can the quite obvious facts of these chapters (Isa. xl.–lxvi.) be explained?

Third Period, 520–420 B.C. The writings which fall into this group may be briefly cited and described thus: First of all come Haggai and Zechariah, whose prophetic work consisted in the encouragement of the returning exiles to undertake the task of rebuilding the Temple (520–518 B.C.). The former of these two is severely practical, and introduces no imaginative light into his work; but Zechariah evidently sees in the civil ruler Zerubbabel and in the priest Joshua a mysterious foreshadowing of that ideal King whom the prophets at the beginning of the Exile had led the people to expect (vi. 12, 13), and in the ordinances of the restored Temple he recognises a spiritual meaning, for even the fasts are to be feasts of truth and peace (viii. 19). Next in chronological order comes the great prophecy (Isa. xxiv.–xxvii.), which may be

safely ascribed to these early days of the restoration (500 B.C.). With all the varied imagery and passionate lyric beauty of an Isaiah this prophet sings the faith and hope of the restored Community in a way which Haggai and Zechariah could never have done. One might say to those who would know what inspiration is, Read these four chapters; and to those who imagine that the Higher Criticism is injurious to the idea of revelation the question may fairly be put: Does not this clear and earnest utterance gain in power and significance when it is placed in its right connection and understood as the Spirit of God animating and directing His nascent Church in the moment of its troubled and doubtful attempts to reform its life after the depression of the Babylonian captivity? It is an instructive exercise in the understanding of revelation to compare these writings of the years 520–500 B.C. in Israel with the teaching of the great Chinese sage, Confucius, who was approximately a contemporary (558–478 B.C.). The contrast between the severe morality, accompanied by a complete religious Agnosticism, which formed the most vital force in the vast Eastern Empire, and the intense belief in a living God as the spring of all moral conduct (cf. Isa. xxvi. 1–10), which burned in the heart of this handful of "feeble Jews" in the rebuilt Jerusalem, sufficiently illustrates the difference between natural and

revealed religion. From Confucius has sprung China as we know it to-day; from Haggai, Zechariah, and the unknown author of Isa. xxiv.–xxvii., has sprung Christendom, with its inner principles of progress, its trust in God, its belief in the Resurrection (cf. Isa. xxvi. 16–19).

After 500 B.C. prophetic voices are silent for half a century or more, and then come several brief writings, which are hardly understood by us because of the imperfect editing to which they have been subjected. Grouping them around the year 430 B.C., which may be regarded, curious to say, as the middle point of Buddha's ministry in the East (480–400 B.C.), we may arrange them thus: "Three Burdens of the word of the Lord," which appear in our Bible as (1) Zech. ix.–xi., xiii. 7–9; (2) Zech. xii.–xiii. 6, xiv.; (3) Malachi. The first of these "burdens" is very difficult to rightly place; its general character seems to point to the circumstances of the Eighth Century, while Ephraim and Judah were still in a sense a brotherhood (xi. 14). On the other hand, the mention of Greece (ix. 13) suggests a much later period than 430 B.C. But this burden contains the forecast of the lowly King who was one day to come to Zion, and the denunciation of the false shepherds, the corrupt rulers who were to precede the coming of the rightful King (xiii. 7–9). Whenever it was written,

or by whom, matters comparatively little. It is full of Divine foresight and beauty. The Second Burden is a somewhat obscure forecast of the coming supremacy of Jerusalem, against which the nations, including Judah, rage in vain. A great spiritual revival was to come, accompanied by a mourning for the Pierced One (xii. 10, &c.); prophecy was to vanish along with idolatry (xiii. 2–6); waters of cleansing were to issue from Jerusalem (xiii. 8, xiv. 8), and holiness of worship was to become universal (xiv. 16–21). If we are right, with Professor Driver, in regarding this as an utterance from the later period of the restored community, we can hardly fail to see that the approach of the Lord Jesus Christ was already casting a light before it. The Third Burden, attributed to Malachi (*i.e.*, "My messenger," iii. 1), gives a sad picture of the religious laxity and indifference which prevailed in those days of expectation. This prophet also was expecting the "coming of Yahveh to his temple;" it appeared to him as a great and terrible day, a season of purification and vengeance. But the singular feature of the prophecy is its insistence on the ritual of the Temple. It reveals to us the very striking fact that even the latest and fullest revelation of God before Christ Jesus came had not disentangled the idea of God as a Spirit from the symbolic manifestations of God in

the forms of sacrifice and worship. The work of these "last utterances" of ancient prophecy is so remarkable that we may freely admit the limitations which only the Son of God Himself would be able to remove.

But, to complete our review of the writings which belong to this period, we are perhaps justified in regarding Joel as a prophet whose function it was to repeat the message of the older prophets to the men of his own day (after 430 B.C.), when the land was threatened and ravaged by an unusual swarm of locusts, which was to him the symbol of the judgment on his people. His was a time when the worship of the Temple was regularly performed, and the priests were held in deserved estimation; but it was given to him to foretell a day when the Outpouring of the Holy Spirit would be manifested in Jerusalem, when the hostility of the nations should be overcome, and the healing waters of which Zech. xiv. speaks should flow out from Jerusalem. In common with all these later prophets he creates a sense of expectation; a time of spiritual refreshing is yet to come.

To this later period of Jewish Prophecy we must assign two books which differ from the autograph writings of Prophets in being historical tractates, including perhaps the utterances of the men whose doings form their subject, Jonah and Daniel. The

dates of these books are approximately fixed by the language; the Aramaisms of Jonah determine its post-exilic origin; while a number of converging proofs, historical and linguistic, go to show that the Book of Daniel was written in the Greek period of Jewish history, and probably as late as the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, 167 B.C. It is the recognition of the dates at which these books were produced that at once enables us to appreciate their value in the history of revelation. The author of the first of these books takes a traditional story about Jonah, the prophet who lived at the beginning of the Eighth Century B.C., in order to convey through it a theological lesson of the utmost value, viz., the concern and the love of God for His children who were outside the borders of His chosen people. The Divine pity for Nineveh, and the reluctance of an Israelitish prophet to recognise and welcome such saving compassion, form a theme which is a stepping-stone from the Old Testament to the New. While we have no reason for regarding the historical part of the book as a narration of facts, we have every reason for treating the theology of the book as a revelation of God.

The author of Daniel has treated the stories which were current in the Jewish community concerning the famous child of the Captivity in a similar way. His immediate object in writing the book was to bring hope

and encouragement to his distressed people in the cruel times of persecution under Antiochus. We need not be disturbed that the historical details in the book are inexact, and that the strenuous efforts to elucidate them have failed. It is not as history that the book is valuable,[1] but as a picture of the Theological beliefs which had become the precious possession of the Jewish Church; it shows us that the coming of the Messiah, the expectation of a judgment on the world, the faith in a resurrection of the righteous, had been revealed to the men of the Second Temple; and in this way the Book of Daniel serves an invaluable purpose in the Canon of the Old Testament Scriptures.

After thus briefly reviewing the three groups of prophetic writings, we may attempt to characterise in general terms the revelation which they convey. If we accept the later date for the Book of Daniel, these writings extend over a period of six hundred years (760–160 B.C.); and what do they contain? First of all they contain the record of a Divine dealing with the people of Israel to which there is no parallel in the history of any other nation. For the guidance and instruction, the moulding and development, of

[1] Prof. Sayce, in *Expository Times*, Dec., 1891, shows how the "historical" chapters of Daniel are merely examples of Jewish Haggadah.

this people a series of men appear who can use the authoritative language, "Thus saith the Lord"; men who do not derive their message or their power from political or ecclesiastical sources, but from a direct communication with God, maintained sometimes by vision and trance and dream, sometimes by the more ordinary channels of the understanding, the judgment, or the imagination. Now listened to with respect, now rejected with scorn, these spiritual leaders of their people maintain through the centuries the fixed belief that Jehovah is the God of Israel, and has in store for His nation a great and wonderful destiny. When at last the prophetic voices grow silent, Israel is left in an attitude of expectation, waiting for what was called "The Hope of Israel," the person so constantly sketched in the language of the prophets, and described by the Targumists as the Anointed One, or Messias.

But in the next place this progressive revelation *from* God implied a progressive revelation *of* God. With a firm hand these prophets, from the first to the last, trace the lineaments of the Unseen Being that "inhabits eternity"; with ever-increasing clearness they identify Him with Righteousness, declare His purpose of punishing sin, and as time goes on, His wonderful intention of saving the sinner. We can never say, even in the highest thought of the Prophets, that God

is revealed as He was afterwards revealed in the Incarnation of the Son, but there are frequent adumbrations of that supreme revelation which are startling in their beauty and power; and all through, the God of the Prophets is a Being removed by an immeasurable distance from the noblest conceptions of their greatest contemporaries, Confucius, Buddha, or Plato.

And once more, with this progressive revelation of God is naturally combined a clearer and keener ethical judgment. The laws of human conduct are stated with remarkable authority. In some departments of life, especially in social and political ideals, the prophets reach a level which even Christian nations have not yet attained. If the law of the Inward Life could not be fully understood until the New Covenant was made, and the writing of the law on the heart could only be effected by the Spirit, the law of the communal life, including the conditions of a happy and prosperous state, is laid down in a way which can hardly be explained except by admitting the direct inspiration of God.

Finally, with the fuller definition of the Divine Nature, and of human conduct, comes the gradual apprehension of a future state, a resurrection from the dead, and the final glory of the righteous. How far this is to be included in the idea of revelation is open to some question; for no Old Testament

writer is so explicit about the Rewards and Punishments in the next world as Plato, for example, is, in the *Gorgias* and the *Republic*. But in the brief and simple expressions concerning the resurrection, which we find in Isa. xxvi. 19, or in Dan. xii. 3, we certainly get an impression of a revelation rising like a star above the horizon, which affords a striking contrast with the elaborate mythology in which Plato clothes the same kind of doctrine. And the very reticence of the Prophets on the subject—for they confine themselves almost entirely to forecasts of an earthly paradise and a state of blessedness to be realised in a human society with its centre in Jerusalem—lends a peculiar emphasis to this tiny dew-drop of distinct belief which distils from the body of their utterances.

On the whole it may be said that the new way of treating the Scriptures which has resulted from the Higher Criticism has enhanced rather than lessened the significance, the wonder, the revelation, of the Prophets. One almost pities our fathers for the comparatively feeble light which was derived from these wonderful writings by those who only found in them a few crude verbal references to details in the life of our Lord, and—in the Book of Daniel at any rate—a very confusing attempt to forecast the future events of history. If the prophets had been what our

fathers supposed them to be, they would not have been nearly so remarkable as they are. Astrologists and modern almanack-makers have often been singularly successful in foreshadowing or even foredating events in a distant future. But no other religion and no other literature exhibits the Divine marks which we have traced in the writings of the Prophets. As the leaders of a unique and chosen people, as the revealers of the One and Holy God, as the Spiritual Seers of eternal truths, as the teachers of the highest laws of human conduct, they stand on an elevation from which, we may safely say, nothing is able to remove them, nothing, that is, except it be the blind and unintelligent dogmatism of religious partisans and opinionated apologists. We may well say, in the words which the Chronicler places in the mouth of Jehoshaphat, "Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; *believe his prophets*, so shall ye prosper" (2 Chron. xx. 20).

CHAPTER VII.

THE "KETHUBIM."

THE uncouth title at the head of this chapter is the Hebrew word for Writings, and is the term employed in the Jewish Canon to cover the third division of the Old Testament books, of which the Law and the Prophets are the two first. We have already made an inroad into the *Kethubim*, or Hagiographa, as they were called in Greek, by classing the Chronicles and Daniel among the histories and the prophets. It is significant of the estimate which the Jewish Scribes formed of those two works that they were included in the third, and the avowedly less authoritative, section of the Scriptures. We are now to review the contents and try to estimate the revelational quality of the remaining works which are included in this Third Volume, as we may term it, of the Old Testament. We have eight different writings to deal with, and they are so various in their character and

their quality that it is difficult even to group them. If we arrange them according to their literary form, we may say five of them, Psalms, Proverbs, Job, the Song of Solomon, and Lamentations, are poetry ; two, Ruth and Esther, are idyllic passages of history ; and one, Ecclesiastes, is a species of didactic prose, which at times passes into poetry. But a more convenient division for the practical purpose which we have in view will be this :—first, the Psalms, or the National Hymn Book of Judaism ; second, the Wisdom Literature, Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes, which may represent the Philosophical writings, as they would have been called in Greece, of Judaism ; third, the four remaining works, which can only be classified by a very general name, the Miscellanea of the Old Testament, The Song, Ruth, Lamentations, and Esther.[1]

The general place of inferiority which the Jews assigned to these writings is not countenanced by the Christian judgment. If among them are included some of the least valuable, it is quite clear that they embrace some of the most priceless utterances, of the Old Testament. And it may serve as a warning to

[1] In the Jewish Church these four and Ecclesiastes were simply entitled the Five Rolls (Megilloth), because they were publicly read at the following festivals :—The Song of Solomon, at the Passover, in March (Nisan) ; Ruth, at Pentecost, in May (Sivan) ; Lamentations, at the Commemoration of the Destruction of Jerusalem, in July (Ab) ; Ecclesiastes, at the Feast of Booths, in September (Tisri) ; Esther, at the Feast of Purim, in February (Adar).

us never to be guided by the Jewish estimate of these ancient writings if we remember that in Jewish opinion the Prophets were of inferior authority to the Law, and the Hagiographa quite subordinate to both ; or if any exception was to be made, it was the Book of Esther, which claimed a position of pre-eminence, and might rank even before the Prophets.[1] The way in which the Jews regarded the Scriptures was, as our Lord told them, misleading and perverted. The fact that they esteemed books highly may generally be regarded as an argument *per contra*. Without hesitation Christianity has reversed their decisions, and probably we should all be agreed in placing the Psalms in the forefront of Old Testament Revelation, while the Prophets and the Law would close up the ranks immediately behind. Let us turn, then, to the Book of Psalms.

Now it is one of the strangest illustrations of the way in which the Church allows herself to be led by the Synagogue that she has in times past constantly confused the question of the Revelation in the Psalms with the very secondary matter of their authorship. The Scribes and Pharisees, working without any critical acumen, and with the pedantic spirit, the arbitrary dogmatism, and the irrational exegesis, which are sufficiently characterised and castigated in

[1] Driver, *Introduction*, p. 452.

the New Testament, had ascribed a large number of the Psalms to the great national hero, David. They were not content with idly asserting his authorship; they even in some cases wrote in the titles the circumstances in which the poems had been composed. By the curious and unintelligent confusions of tradition these titles and worthless critical scholia of the Jewish literati became identified with the text; and to many a worthy Christian even to-day it appears as if the repudiation of these glosses was a denial of the Psalms, and a refusal to admit their inspiration. It is important, therefore, for us to broadly state that the nature of the revelation contained in the Psalms is of such a character that it cannot possibly be affected by the doubt concerning their authorship. Many of the most beautiful Psalms are confessedly anonymous, others are attributed to authors whose names are known to us mainly because of this attribution; and the Psalms which an uncritical speculation ascribed to David remain precisely what they were if we see reason to dispute his authorship. The question, then, Who wrote the Psalms, and when were they written? may be dismissed at once as entirely irrelevant to our present inquiry.

The nature of the Revelation contained in these unique compositions may be defined by an illustration. In a reflector-telescope the heavenly bodies are

thrown upon a mirror at the bottom of the great tube, and the astronomer studies them by gazing not at the stars themselves, but at the image which lies before him in his instrument. In much the same way the personality of the psalmist receives into itself the reflection of the Heavenlies, and especially of God Himself, and we, like the astronomer, are permitted to study the Divine images presented in these human minds. Or in order further to illustrate the process, let us suppose that we are endeavouring to form some conception of the Heavens by looking into lakes and streams among the hills; there will be many varieties of correctness and completeness; now the troubled wave will show the trembling image of a planet, broken and variable; now the still mountain tarn will reveal in its bosom the perfect orb like a moveless lamp; sometimes the crisping wind which sweeps the surface of the water will blot out, as with a tumult of passion, the whole of the reflected sky; sometimes, again, the gentle waves will show no image, but only the broad sheen of the sunlight or the moonlight. Now borrowing from the idea of the telescope the conception that the psalmists are not ordinary persons, not even ordinary poets, but singular and gifted personalities that mirror God more distinctly than the common human sight can see Him; and borrowing from the simile of waters the

truth that the moods, the changes, the defects, of these personalities constantly modify the image of Divine things which is reflected in them, we may form a not wholly inadequate notion of the religious qualities in the Psalms. There are many memorable passages where the still, receptive soul of the poet throws back the well-nigh faultless image of God, and we can contemplate with wonder and gratitude the face which no man has seen. There are many other passages where the poet submits himself to the Heavenly Light, and reveals to us a human being filled with God, exultant in the sense of union, of dependence, of peace, and of rapture. There are other Psalms in which the poet takes into his heart his whole nation, sets himself to speak of its history, its triumphs, its punishment, its healing, or sings of the King and the Throne, the Temple and its services, the Law and its precepts ; and here the God-filled soul presents in the Divine Light the deep significance of these things. The suffering nation, as in Second Isaiah, becomes, mysteriously and unconsciously, a forecast of the Saviour ; the records of national history become a type of God's dealings with the Church ; the songs of the King chant the Ideal King, such a king as never was until Jesus came ; and "the songs of degrees," sung by the worshippers in the Second Temple, express the praise not only of Christians

assembling on earth, but of the multitude whom no man can number before the throne. In a word, these lyric minds, when clean and polished, reflect the very Being of God, and His thought for His people and the world, with a richness and a beauty to which there is hardly a parallel even in the writings of the Prophets. The Revelation of the Psalms is only difficult to define because it is so manifest and vast; like the light, it dazzles the eyes which attempt to contemplate it.

But our illustration enables us to understand the inequalities in the Psalms. There are some passages in which the subjective medium disturbs the clearness of the Divine image, passages where human passion struggles with Divine Revelation, passages which rather present the desire for God than the realisation of Him. Not infrequently the cry of distress turns the psalm into a dirge, though sometimes the progress of the poem displays the gradual recovery of peace and trust in God. In some psalms the fierce imprecatory vengeance of a persecuted man, or nation, breaks out in a way which is the exact opposite of what our Lord requires in His followers, so that Christians who attempt to sing these psalms as the expression of their own religious life justify afresh the complaint of our Saviour, "Ye search the Scriptures, . . . but ye will not come unto me." If there are

phases of spiritual life and visions of Divine Truth in the Psalms which make us feel that even the New Testament can carry us no farther, there are also represented in this Hymn Book passions, moods, doubts, fears, which it is the object of the Gospel to correct rather than to encourage. If now and again in the light of God a psalmist rises to the great conception of an immortality beyond the grave, in other places the dark vail which overhangs the tomb is unpierced, and the poet still believes that death means the silence and the bloodless inactivity of the Shades, according to the general conception of Antiquity. It is, then, in this book, where revelation is most unmistakable, that the mechanical notion of revelation is most inadmissible. Without a criterion, without a spirit of discrimination, we not only lose the real religious teaching of the book, but we hopelessly confuse what we do not lose. By putting upon precisely the same level the lyric utterances of men who are full of the Spirit and those of men who are only imperfectly subjected to that Divine Influence, and by calling the poems of both kinds the Word of God, we make it almost impossible for the simple mind to understand what the Word of God is. Nothing could be farther from the truth than to describe Psalm lxxxiii., for example, as the Word of God ; it is by its very form the word of men, of

men, too, who have not entered very deeply into the counsels of God; it is in all probability a stirring cry from the time of the Maccabees,[1] when the Jewish Community was seeking to re-establish the ancient spirit of national independence; it breathes all the strength, all the nobility, all the high religious conviction of that important era; it is inspired by a passionate faith in Yahveh, and by a genuine desire to drive all nations into the confession and worship of the supreme name; but to confuse this impassioned national sentiment, this fierce hatred of the nation's enemies, this wild imprecation,

> O my God, make them like the whirling dust,
> As stubble before the wind,

with the thought or the heart of the Eternal, is not reverence to God, though it has sometimes been regarded as respect to the Bible. And if the question is asked, How, then, are we to know which parts of the Psalms are revelation and which are not, or by what test can we measure the degree of revelation and the admixture of merely human feeling in any particular composition? the answer may be very confidently given: The Word of God authenticates itself; it does not rest upon the authority of the Scriptures, as some people strangely seem to think,

[1] Prof. Cheyne, in his *Bampton Lectures*, may be said to have proved the Maccabean date of this Psalm.

but the Scriptures derive all their authority from the Word of God which speaks in them. The difficulty is not so great as the defenders of a rigid orthodoxy would represent. Light is manifest of itself, and is not the less manifest because of the shadows which are made when it falls upon the various objects in its path ; the Light of God is similarly manifest, and to a candid mind that Light streams through the Psalter, and is not really liable to any confusion or obscuration because of the human elements which stand as objects in its way. And for the Christian, for one, that is, who has found in Christ the interpretative Word of God, the Psalms deliver their message without any serious stammering on account of the human tongues which speak them. We use Psalm li. for our confession, Psalm xxxii. for the joy of our pardon, Psalm ciii. for the utterance of our sanctification, Psalm xxiii. for the expression of our joyful rest in our Redeemer, and so on, without any temptation to take upon our lips the words of gloom or doubt, the cries of anger and revenge, or the imperfect views of God which occur in other parts of the book. It cannot be too often repeated that the difficulties in grasping the Revelation contained in Scripture are not created by the Scriptures themselves, which are singularly self-evidential and self-discriminative, but by the *Theory of Revelation* which was borrowed

from Judaism and incautiously adopted by the Christian Church.[1]

But, secondly, we are to look at the Wisdom Literature, three specimens of which appear amongst the Hagiographa. We say specimens only, because there are outside the Canon two books at least, belonging to the same class, which are excluded for reasons which it would be hard to formulate. But the *Book of Wisdom* is not only of great intrinsic value; it affords a most interesting link in one phase of revelation, viz., the connection between the personified Wisdom of Proverbs viii. and the Wisdom of God, Christ Jesus.[2] And *Ecclesiasticus* is, as a treatise on ethics, superior to the book which bears a similar name in our English Bible. We are not, however, engaged in estimating the Revelation of books outside our Canon, and we may therefore confine our attention to the three works in the Bible which may be classed among the Wisdom Literature.

Now it may be at once observed that the very

[1] Professor Driver's terse description of the religious qualities of the Psalter, in his *Introduction* (p. 346), though it says nothing about the criterion by which the reader is to distinguish the religious truths from the religious half-truths, or errors, in the Psalms, sufficiently shows how entirely the spiritual value of this most precious part of the Old Testament remains unaffected by the frankest treatment to which Criticism has subjected it.

[2] It is from this book that the striking expression in Heb. i. 3 is borrowed.

nature of *Wisdom* as it is understood in Hebrew writings is in distinct antithesis to Revelation in the more specific sense of the word. Wisdom, or Philosophy, is the result of exercising the thoroughly human faculties of observation and reasoning upon the world, man, and human life. Of course every Theist admits that in the last resort all truth may be traced up to God. But truth derived through the medium of the ordinary perceptions and judgments is not what we usually intend by Revelation. If we were to give this loose and inaccurate connotation to the word we should be obliged to include Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Confucius, among inspired writers. In the Wisdom Literature, as such, we have those observations of moral truth, and those interpretations of life, which may be reached by any earnest and reflecting mind ; and wherein the course of these books we encounter truths or ideas which may be regarded more specifically as revelation it is safe to say that they appear as part of the common stock of beliefs which the writers held as members of a specific religious community rather than as particular revelations delivered to them. The Philosophy of Judaism was necessarily tinged with the great truths which are contained in the Prophets, the Psalms, and the Law, but as Philosophy, or human speculation, it must be very sharply distinguished from Divine

Revelation. It is the more necessary to insist on this because there are some statements and opinions contained in these three books which can only be ascribed to God at the cost of lowering our whole conception of Him. Great indeed is the responsibility of teachers who have led ignorant people to suppose that all the prudential maxims of the Proverbs, all the frenetic arguments of Job, and all the pessimistic endæmonism of Ecclesiastes are to be considered, as a matter of faith, the specific words of God.

It may, however, be said: If these Wisdom Books are merely human philosophy, what place have they in a book of Divine Revelation? The answer will perhaps appear plainer after we have briefly glanced at the contents of the books; but it must be very distinctly affirmed that the notion of *all* the writings which are included in our Hebrew Canon, being a Revelation, or even of a revelational character, is quite arbitrary and unsupported by any satisfactory authority. If there are writings in the Old Testament which are not revelation, they are not made revelation by being bound up in the volume. It is a matter of specific inquiry, which must not be prejudiced by any foregone conclusion, to determine whether these writings are or are not revelation.

Now, looking at the Book of Proverbs, we observe

at once that its several parts differ considerably from one another in religious quality. There are large tracts of the book (*e.g.*, chaps. xxv.–xxix., chap. xxx. 10–33, chap. xxxi. 1–9) which contain only a remote or an occasional reference to ideas of a specifically religious character. On the other hand, the main body of the book, x.–xxiv., is full of religious references, and of sound moral teaching; it is like the splendid revelations of the Prophets broken up into current coin for daily circulation; while the Introduction, chaps. i.–ix., is among the most wonderful passages of the Old Testament. It is almost impossible, while we follow the grave and stately eloquence of the writer, to resist the conviction that his moral earnestness is becoming a vehicle of revelation, and his eyes are lifted up to see under the form of Wisdom,—a personal agent, the first-born child of the Creator, standing beside Him and directing Him in the work of Creation, afterwards in history inspiring kings and princes with their best thoughts, delighting in the sons of men, and promising abundant reward to those who will commit themselves to her guidance,—that Word of God who was one day to become flesh and save the men whom He loved.

The Higher Criticism, in teaching us to distinguish not only between different aphorisms in the collection,

but also between the body of the book and this magnificent Introduction, has enabled us more firmly to grasp the revelation of such a passage as this without committing ourselves to a judgment on all the scattered precepts which form the collections of proverbs. We are able to hear the voice of God speaking to us in such places as x. 27, 29, xv. 33–xvi. 9, xxv. 21, 22, xxx. 5, 6, without perplexing tender consciences by telling them that xxvii. 22 is a word of God, that xxx. 15, 16 is an inspired utterance, or that xxxi. 6, 7 is a precept emanating from the lips that spoke the Sermon on the Mount. It is on the ground of the Revelation in the book, a revelation plainly perceptible to the religious reader, that we may vindicate its place among the Old Testament writings, but we are not entitled to say that its place there gives to all its contents the quality of revelation. The Proverbial Philosophy of the Hebrews bears innumerable traces of the comparatively high spiritual ideals in the midst of which it grew up, and the book containing it happened to be edited by an inspired writer who was able to write the immortal Introduction ; but if we would appreciate the revelation in it we must read with a discriminating spirit.

The second book of the Wisdom Literature, Job, is one of the most fascinating works in religious, or, indeed, in any literature, and we must exercise a

severe restraint in not enlarging our study of it out of proportion to our present inquiry. Here is philosophy robed in the many-coloured mantle of Poetry. Here is one of the gravest problems of human life discussed in a half-dramatic form, and with a wealth of language, a splendour of imagery, and a fine tumult of thought, to which no other composition in the world affords an exact parallel. But how far is this Philosophy a Divine Philosophy? How far does the inspiration overstep the limits of a poetical afflatus and become the voice of God speaking through human lips? What are the solid grains of imperishable truth given as revelation, not to be given in any other way, through this immortal poem? These are the questions before us. First of all, it is necessary to remind ourselves of the date and the character of the book; for through overlooking these most important considerations the whole scope of the revelation in it has been misapprehended. Scholars are practically agreed to-day that both on linguistic and theological grounds the date must be sought in the Exile; and a new beauty and meaning are discovered in the book when one realises that Job is in the author's mind a personification of the suffering Israel, and a companion picture to the similar representation in the contemporary prophet, ii. Isaiah. The old and crude notion that, because

the condition of society depicted in the book is patriarchal, the author lived in or near the patriarchal times, is no more conclusive than if one were to argue from *Paradise Lost* that the author lived in Paradise or shortly after the expulsion from the Garden. For this leads us to observe that the Book of Job is a Poem of the same literary type as Milton's Epic. All except chaps. i., ii., the introduction, chap. xxxii. 1–5, and the closing paragraph, chap. xlii. 7–17, is in the metrical form of Hebrew Poetry. An attentive reader with any literary sense would no more dream of committing the author to the assertion that the things which he described really happened than of charging Milton with unveracity for describing the Battle in Heaven or the conversation between Raphael and Adam. Literary men and scholars of all kinds have understood this ever since the dawn of modern Biblical Scholarship, but the difficulty is to get ordinary religious people to see that this perfectly obvious fact may be admitted without destroying our belief in revelation. It is of course quite possible, and even likely, that the story is founded on tradition. The man of Uz was no doubt a type of patient endurance; but the great unknown poet who wrote the book used the tradition just as Tennyson has used the legend of Arthur in the *Idyls of the King*. The very form of

the narrative shows that he does not even wish to make his story seem a hard and literal record of fact. The numerical statement of Job's possessions, the methodical account of his bereavements, and the exact duplication of the property in the day when "the Lord turned the captivity of Job," show that the details are simply the product of poetic composition. The poet conceives his own conditions, and presents the scenery and properties in his own way, for his object is not historical or biographical, but didactic and ethical. To gravely argue, therefore, that the Prologue of this Poem is to be accepted as a revelation of what takes place in Heaven, a revelation that the sons of God and Satan meet there before the Lord, is not only a most misleading religious dogma, but also a childish and grotesque literary misconception. This unimaginative literalism is of a piece with Babbage's suggestion that the Poet Laureate should correct the famous verse which occurs in the *Vision of Sin*, and, in the interests of mathematical accuracy, read :—

> For every moment dies a man,
> And one *and a sixteenth* is born.

When the literary facts are fully understood, the kind of arguments which have been reared on the poetical properties of the Book of Job will seem hardly less amazing than this.

But now, fully realising that we are studying a great and noble poem written in the Captivity by an Israelite who was seeking to understand the mystery of sorrow, and the explanation of the calamity which had befallen the chosen people, we may proceed to state in a few words the gist of his thought. He labours, in the dialogue between Job and the friends, to demonstrate that suffering is not necessarily the penalty of sin; it may be the test and the trial of righteousness. God is not merely a Judge who awards punishment to sinners, He is also a Father who would make His sons perfect through suffering, and will bring them through temptation to a more prosperous and happy issue than could be reached by any less painful way. The poet does not hesitate to put into Job's mouth the wild and almost desperate conflict of thought through which the severe conclusion is at least reached. We are permitted to hear the sufferer charging God with injustice, vehemently declaring his own innocence, and almost sinking under the intolerable weight of the current theory that suffering is always penal, until deliverance comes in an escape from this narrow and incomplete view of God and His dealings with men. As this passionate argument proceeds, one great truth after another is struck out like sparks from the impact of steel on flint. Sometimes in the mouth of Job, sometimes in

the mouths of the friends who "darken counsel," come brilliant flashes which deserve, if ever anything uttered by human lips deserved, the name of Revelation. It is not Job, or Eliphaz, or Zophar, or Bildad, that speaks ; it is always this great unknown poet who has searched into the very heart of things ; nay, it is not he, but God, the God who has been revealed to him in his earnest and passionate search. Thus here for the first time in Scripture is portrayed the action of Conscience (xv. 20 ff.) in language which finds an echo in Juvenal, the greatest ethical poet of Rome.[1] And if, on the principle of definition we have adopted, we hesitate to describe as revelation a truth which is so necessarily perceived in "the conscious breast" of man when he comes to reflect, we can hardly refuse to give the term revelation to that magnificent assurance of a future life and a Divine Vindicator which is borne in upon the sufferer when human friends fail to understand him (xix. 23–27). It is true that Plato taught a similar doctrine, and a belief in a future life plays a greater part in ancient literature generally than in the Old Testament writings, but the point to observe is the nature and ground of the conviction which leads to the faith. Job is represented

[1] Evasisse putes quos diri conscia facti
Mens habet attonitos et surdo verbere cædit,
Obscurum quatiente animo tortore flagellum?

as literally battling his way through doubt and misgiving to a belief in a beneficent God (x. 8–12), and thence to an idea of reconciliation with God (xiv. 13–15), finally to win through to the conviction that God will clear him and manifest his innocence (xvi. 18), and he himself shall see God in the glad after life (xix. 25–27). The revelation seems to lie not so much in the hope of immortality as in the method by which that hope grows to a certainty in the poet's heart. But looking at Revelation in the most specific sense we are bound to confess that God is revealed in this book with a fulness which marks in some respects an advance beyond the highest teaching in other parts of the Old Testament. Nowhere else in any literature has the Revelation of God in Nature been presented with such impressive magnificence or such a musical diapason of imagery and rhythm. Even the grandeur of ii. Isaiah and the lyric inspiration of Psalms civ. and cxxxix. fall below the highest notes of the Book of Job. And the peculiar and striking conception of the God revealed in Nature as identical with the Father of mankind who orders all human events for glorious moral ends, is one of those precious truths which once gained can never be lost. The writing which first withdrew the veil and enabled human eyes to see it is indeed in the strictest sense of the term a *revelation*. The ethical teaching of the

book which aims at producing holy conduct as the best substitute men can find for that wisdom which in its fulness belongs only to God, is secondary to the teaching about God Himself; but merely as a vivid light on human life, as a guide to conduct, as a powerful inspiration to justice, purity, truth, and mercy, the *Book of Job* must rank among the words of God which are a lamp to our path.

The questions, therefore, which were raised by this particular book receive no doubtful answer when the study of the book is completed: the Philosophy of the book is human, but it is the struggle, and the successful struggle, of human thought to reach the Divine thought, and if the struggle is human the issue is Divine. And because of this Divine action which plays throughout the poem in the thought of the writer we have to candidly admit that this is no mere poetical inspiration. Here is poetry of a high order, but there is more than poetry here; this poet is speaking from experience when he says:—

> Now a thing was secretly brought to me,
> And mine ear received a whisper thereof,
> In thoughts from the visions of the night
> When deep sleep falleth on man.
>
> * * *
>
> Then a spirit passed before my face.
>
> * * *
>
> A form was before mine eyes,
> Silence—and I heard a voice,
> Shall mortal man be more just than God? (v. 12–17).

And because of this immediate trafficking of the poet's spirit with the Spirit of his God truths are manifested, truths which come only from God; the Eternal Being, the Maker of Heaven and Earth, passes before us, and we too see Him with our eyes, as well as hear Him with our ears; and in the light of His self-manifestation, our life on earth, with its inexplicable sorrows, receives a new interpretation. Not only is the captivity of Israel turned, but the captivity of the Human Race is as it were visited, and to it is given the promise of a Redemption.

The third book of the Wisdom Literature, which is known in Hebrew as *Qohéleth*, a feminine or neuter noun signifying "that which preaches," and in the Greek Version, and thence transferred to our Bible, as *Ecclesiastes*, is a work of the latest times before the coming of Christ. We may safely say that it owes its place in the Canon to the fact that the writer wrote under the name of Israel's early king, Solomon, and also to the orthodox touches which were put to it later, as has been supposed, by one who wished to save its reputation.[1] Otherwise this most irreligious of religious books would never have been regarded as *revelation*. To speak of it

[1] Cheyne, *Job and Solomon*, p. 204, who points out that xii. 1*a*, and xii. 13, 14, are additions quite out of harmony with the general spirit of the book, and hence argues that they are probably additions.

as the Word of God is an impiety. The author's radically false theory is "that there is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink and enjoy life" as well as he can under the miserable circumstances (ii. 24–26, iii. 16–22, viii. 10–15, ix. 7–10, xi. 9). In his opinion "all is vanity and the pursuit of wind." His sweeping condemnation of women (vii. 28), his idea that man is on a level with the beasts (iii. 16–22), his craven counsel to submit to a despot even after his frank recognition that the despot is bad (x. 20), are illustrations of the writer's human and uninspired point of view. And yet if we are prepared to fully recognise that this piece of *Wisdom* is not revelation at all, we may rejoice that it is included in our Bible, for it expresses the hopelessness and emptiness of human life without revelation; and considering that it sprang from a nation which had the Law and the Prophets, we may infer how much man needed One who was greater than they.

Our treatment of *Ecclesiastes* has already taken us over into the third group of the *Hagiographa*, and we may pass at once to that beautiful composition which like *Ecclesiastes* bears the name of Solomon, the Song of Songs. The Jews interpreted the little poem as an allegory, and in the Targum it is supposed to cover the history of Israel from Moses to the Messiah. The

early Christian Fathers read the allegory in a new way, and saw in the Love Song a description of the passages between Christ and His Church. The sobriety of modern taste shrinks from applying these rather voluptuous expressions to that high spiritual relation, and except in a few beautiful and familiar quotations the little book has almost dropped out of present-day Biblical Teaching. But here again Criticism has been rendering true service to religion, and has restored the book to us, reading afresh its beautiful lesson while frankly admitting that there is no *revelation* in it at all. This conclusion of Criticism must not be misunderstood. When Origen determines to use these exquisite cadences as the language between Christ and the soul there may be a true spiritual insight, a veritable inspiration, in such an application. A great Shakspere student might turn *Romeo and Juliet* to a similar account; but we must clearly distinguish between the original character or intent of the composition and the use which a subsequent religious teacher may make of it. Now viewed in itself, the Song of Songs is one of the most exquisite poems in any language; it probably dates from an early period in the Northern Kingdom, when literature flourished at the royal court of Samaria. If we may accept Ewald's interpretation of its somewhat obscure movements—obscure, because the speaker is

in no case distinctly marked, but left to be inferred as in Browning's dramatic lyrics—a Shulamite shepherd girl has won the admiration of King Solomon, who has seen her on a royal progress; but the girl clings to her rustic lover at home, and when she is brought to the king's seraglio her thoughts turn to the past, and she yearns for the wooer who had won her heart before. The interpretation is by no means beyond question, but it yields a beautiful result; it makes the plot turn on the fidelity of the maiden who will not be seduced by the splendour and authority of a king to forget her humble and faithful swain, and the poem ends with the restoration of the sunburnt shepherdess to her country home and her country love. Here is foundation for a very pretty allegorising, if we are to follow the Targum and Origen; we may read into the song the faithfulness of the soul which has chosen Christ rather than the world, and will not give Him up, though it is wooed by all the pomp and attractions which the world can offer. But probably most thoughtful minds to-day will feel some irreverence in this crude kind of allegorising, and will prefer to accept the lovely little poem with its delicacy, its passion, its breath of flowers, and its triumph of loyal hearts, simply on its own merits, nor concern themselves with the questionable task of showing that it is a Divine Revelation.

A similar method of dealing with the little book of *Ruth* will suggest itself. Revelation in the strict sense the book does not contain ; it simply gives an idyllic picture of a link in the chain of David's ancestry, showing how a Moabitess found a home in Israel's religion, and a place in the royal line. It does not attempt to tell us anything fresh about God or about Divine things. But it is so beautiful in its delineation of simple human virtues, it breathes so touchingly the spirit of religious dutifulness in daily life, and in addition to this it has such an indefinable charm of its own, that we are in no mood to quarrel with it for being no more than it professes to be ; nor can any laboured claim for a more recondite interpretation of it commend it more to our attention or secure it more surely in our affections.

The Book of Lamentations comes in a different category. Though the authorship of Jeremiah is a tradition which rests only on the LXX. and the Targum, there is no reason to question that the five poems which form the book spring from the age of Jeremiah ; they are dirges which give expression to the mingled sorrow and hope of the exiles who were carried into captivity on the fall of Jerusalem (597–586 B.C.). The central poem of the five, chap. iii., throbs with the truth which was revealed to the sufferers in that dark hour of trouble, and it remains

for ever as an interpretation of the mystery of pain which could come only from God Himself.

There remains only the *Book of Esther*. It was hinted at the beginning of this chapter that the Jewish estimation of the book was higher than ours would be. As a record of national triumph over a dangerous foe it would naturally be dear to patriotic readers, and it would be kept in perpetual memory by the recitation of it at the Feast of Purim year by year, for which no doubt it was composed. But no ingenuity of those who are bent on maintaining that every word of Scripture is given by inspiration of God has been able to show in what sense the Book of Esther is a revelation, or even contains a revelation. There is no evidence to show that the details are historically correct, and though the general character of Xerxes (Ahasuerus) in our other authorities is not unlike that which is delineated here, it is singular that no other authority mentions Esther as his queen. But if the details are correct, this only goes to enhance the moral difficulties of the book. The fierce Jewish vindictiveness, which slaughters thousands of innocent people in so-called self-defence, breaks out in an aftermath of unnecessary carnage. Happily the name of God is not only never invoked, it is never even mentioned in the book. The only religious exercise referred to is that of fasting. Thus we can cherish

the hope that nothing quite so dreadful ever happened and the certainty that if it did, God had no other part in it than that general forbearance with the violence and savagery of His people which often evokes our wonder, and sometimes drives us to the appeal of prayer. And if the theology of the book is imperceptible, its moral tendency bad, and its historical truth questionable, we may well ask, What is revealed in it? The heroism of the Jewish maiden. But there is a similar heroism in the Book of Judith. The frustration of schemes formed against the enemies of God? Yes, but the book does not attribute the frustration to God, nor is the Feast of Purim recognisable as a religious occasion. On this subject the book, whatever it may incidentally show, *reveals* nothing.

We have had to pass the Kethubim in review seriatim because there is more difficulty in estimating the revelation of miscellaneous writings than in grasping the broad effects of such works as the Law or the Prophets. We have seen that here the greatest varieties occur. In the Psalms, Job, and Proverbs we find the high-water mark of Old Testament Revelation; in Ecclesiastes and Esther we find books which cannot be described as Revelation at all.

But now placing the division of the Old Testament

that we have just been examining along with the two other divisions which occupied us in previous chapters, let us try to gather together the main lines of Revelation which result from the Old Testament books as a whole, and let us distinctly conceive the position of Revelation in that solemn pause which occurs between the Old Testament and the New. First of all there is Judaism. The net result of fifteen centuries of the Divine manifestations and exceptional dealings, which constitute the history of Israel, was to produce a unique religious State, with its centre in the restored Temple at Jerusalem. The ritual of the worship, the books of the Law, the splendid forecasts of prophets, the memory of great kings and wide dominions, all conspired to give to this little community of Jews a conviction that it was made and preserved for an end which was as yet unrealised ; everything about it seemed to be an anticipation and a prophecy ; it was a shadow of good things to come, and its chosen spirits were constantly expecting a Messias who should give the touch of completeness to that which was felt to be great, but incomplete.

This preparation of a symbolic people nourishing a sublime hope was in itself sufficient to vindicate the term "revelation" as applied to the history and records of the people ; but it was not all. Two other revelations had been growing from a dim

twilight towards a dawn through all the long period of the national development. One was the Nature of God, the other was a true conception of ethics in its relation to religion. The gradual growth of these revelations has been obscured until Criticism has taught us to put the Old Testament Literature in its right perspective; but the gross result of these revelations is perfectly plain, and always has been, in the book as it stands. It had been clearly revealed by the time of which we are speaking, that God is One, Invisible, Almighty, Holy, Righteous, and that as the Father of Israel He was bent on bringing all nations into His obedience and fear. The God revealed in the Old Testament is parted by an immeasurable distance from any other conception of God which man had then formed; and if He is more fully revealed in the New Testament, that does not in the least discredit the grandeur and truth of the revelation in the Old. It had been clearly revealed, too, in a hundred marvellous utterances of prophets, priests, philosophers, and poets, that the righteous God required righteousness—yes, inward righteousness; that no outward ritual could take the place of heart-cleanness; and that the righteousness which God required was not only a right relation to Him, but a right relation between man and man; indeed the Social Ethics of true religion is stated with such

fulness in the Old Testament that it requires no addition and little repetition in the New. Finally, it had been revealed, rather in the elaborate symbolism of the Temple Sacrifices than by any very distinct spiritual teaching, that, if sinful men were to be righteous as the righteous God required them to be, there was need of *an Atonement*, a work, a fact, larger than anything which could be expressed by Temple, Altar, Priest, and victims all together: and many obscure utterances of the Prophets had hinted at the nature of this Atonement, which would have to be a Person, a Servant, a Branch, a King, a Victim, a Sufferer, a Conqueror. In a word, the Problem of Atonement had been revealed, but not its solution, and the Jewish Church was left, consciously or unconsciously expecting its solution. The latest Old Testament writing, the Book of Daniel, expresses this eager expectation—the appointed time would be accomplished, and then would come that which was "to finish transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy" (Dan. ix. 24). That was the attitude in which the Revelation of the Old Testament left religious minds in the middle of the Second Century before Christ came.

And we may end our study of these Ancient

Scriptures with the remark that they who do not perceive the Revelation in them can hardly have studied them, or must have studied them only with the veil of a mistaken dogmatism over their eyes, which has obscured their vision and excited a most unnecessary antipathy.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SUMMIT OF REVELATION.

"Jesus, the surety of a better testament."—HEB. vii. 22.

THE first impression in passing from the Old Testament to the New may very well be a feeling of disappointment. The Old Testament literature is so great and so varied, and in its higher flights so far transcends all other writings which have come down to us from antiquity, that the New Testament, written in degenerate Greek and almost entirely without pretensions to literary form, may give to the mere scholar a shock of repulsion, and may even be to him a stumbling-block. Here are no artistic poems like those which we meet with in the Psalter; here are no systematic Law Books, and no flights of human eloquence like Deuteronomy or ii. Isaiah; here are simply some plain, unvarnished annals of a life which was once lived on the earth, some fragmentary Acts of a few earnest propagandists of a new faith, a collection of letters from

the same men, and a striking Apocalypse written in ungrammatical Greek. But a closer study modifies the first impression; it begins to appear that the literary imperfections are an earthen vessel containing a priceless treasure, and the idea spontaneously arises that the meanness of the vessel is not undesigned, but is rather appointed in order that the excellency of the glory may be of God. As the vastness of the treasure is gradually perceived a curious reaction takes place; the literary medium is sanctified by that which it conveys; a feeling steals over the Church that every line of it, every word of it, must be Divine, and eventually not only is the imperfection of the form forgotten, but the very flaws of the earthen vessel are treated with a superstitious reverence, and it is held as an impiety to point out that the syntax, the vocabulary, the style of the writings are far from perfect. Our object in the present chapter is to realise the marvellous Revelation which has thus shed a kind of glamour over the books in which it is contained; and our object in the rest of this volume must be to disentangle the revelation from its medium, lest a false reverence for the earthen vessel should ultimately—as has sometimes happened in the past—discredit the treasure which has been delivered to us in it.

The Summit and Crown of Revelation is Jesus

Christ. All the Old Testament writings which we have been reviewing pointed forward to Him : their essential object was to create a community in which He should appear, to prepare a people through which He could work upon the world, to raise and maintain an expectation of His coming, to so far define the manner of His appearing that they who waited for the hope of Israel would be able to recognise Him when He came. As He said, all the Scriptures spoke of Him. When at last He came, and men beheld His glory as of the only begotten of the Father; when the Scriptures were fulfilled in Him, and He was seen to be the end of the Law, in His personal appearing and in His work, His death, His resurrection ; the revelation of God was completed. And this completed revelation of God was preserved to the world by the mighty gift of the Holy Ghost, who was to take of the things of Christ and to show them to men, and to realise His manifestation amongst His believing people even to the end of the Age.

It is necessary to conceive distinctly that the crown of God's revelation is a Person, and that the continuance of this crowned and perfected revelation of God is secured by a supernatural operation of God on human hearts which is very appropriately described as the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Only

when this great truth is firmly grasped are we able to see the right place and significance of the New Testament writings. It is not, we may hope, uncharitable to say that there is a faith in the Scriptures which is the counterpart of a singular unfaith in God. Christian men are heard speaking as if the existence of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit depended upon the New Testament Scriptures; they seem sometimes to imply that if the New Testament were destroyed—if, for instance, Diocletian's imperial purpose of entirely rooting out the Scriptures from the Church had been realised—the Lord Christ would have no existence, and the operations of the Spirit would cease. Such reasoners do not seem to observe that the whole object of the New Testament writings—again and again expressed—is not to exalt themselves, but to lead us to a living experience of a spiritual life determined by the indwelling of Christ. If that fact of experience is not effected, the New Testament is for us a failure; but if it is effected, it should lead us to the discovery that Christ Himself is among us, as He promised that He would be, and God will by no means take His Holy Spirit from us. Nay, strange to say, the Christians, of whom we speak, do not even notice that the New Testament is itself a record of the Christian faith being propagated at a wonder-

fully rapid rate without a New Testament at all. Peter had no writings to appeal to, except the Old Testament Scriptures; Paul preached "his gospel" without any reference to a written gospel, and never hinted that the further preaching of the faith should depend even on his own Epistles. It may as well be frankly stated that the frantic and superstitious faith in the Apostolic writings, a faith going far beyond what they claim or suggest themselves, may be simply the outcome of unbelief. People who are sunk in this kind of Bibliolatry often do not believe in the things which the New Testament itself teaches: they do not believe that Christ, in the operations of His Holy Spirit, is actually present in the world; they do not believe in that "unction from the Holy One" which, John said, would lead us into all truth. Radically incredulous of spiritual realities, without any real trust in a living and present God, they find a refuge from their infidelity in the letter of Scripture, and like those Thibetan Buddhists who have found a Bible and set it in a shrine and burn incense before it, they really worship the Scriptures instead of the living God, and make a slavish and unreasoning acceptance of all that is written take the place of an inward subjection to God, and a realised experience of His personal manifestation to the believing heart.

Now it is in this irrational and indeed irreligious

treatment of the Scriptures that the greater part of modern infidelity strikes its roots; from it the anti-Christian attacks derive their weapons. The faith in our Lord Jesus Christ of which the New Testament speaks is a thing so real, so transforming, so operative, that no unbeliever can say anything against it. Regenerate lives, the epistles known and read of all men, can be questioned by none. But the faith in the New Testament writings, firmly and unintelligently held, gives openings for a thousand attacks. Different interpreters take different views of their exegesis; variant readings leave the meaning of certain passages doubtful. In these writings there are many things which are easily wrested, and if a certain method of interpretation is adopted, may be made to countenance the most misleading errors. Seizing, as untrained and ill-balanced minds are apt to do, on precisely the most questionable and ambiguous passages, and giving to them an unjustifiable prominence, many so-called "Bible-students" will create more difficulties and suggest more doubts in a few discourses than an ordinary Christian can hope to settle in a lifetime. Every absurdity professing to rest upon the Word of God discredits the Word of God in the eyes of thoughtful men; and fanatics who appear to be made into fanatics by their study of Scripture seem like a woeful warning to sober

minds against the study which seems to produce such results. It is noticeable, therefore, that the New Testament never demands faith in itself, but only faith in Christ ; it nowhere speaks of itself as a whole which is to be accepted *à priori* by those who would come to God, but always unites its differing but concordant voices in entreating men to seek a personal reconciliation with God, a direct enduement of the Power, and an inward assurance from the Witness, of the Spirit. It is one of the most significant of facts that in many parts of the orthodox Protestant Church a claim is made for the New Testament which it never advances for itself, and in consequence the truth which the New Testament does proclaim is constantly becoming obscured and discredited. And as this claim is one which is entirely unsupported by any authority, the people who prefer it are proportionately angry when it is questioned. People who rest on the assured facts of the Spiritual Life are quite calm when their principle is attacked, for they know that it cannot be shaken ; but people who rest on the dogma about the Inspiration and Infallibility of the New Testament writings are rendered violent and denunciatory by the slightest question of their position, because they have a suspicion that they have no proof to offer except their own assertion, and they think that their assertion is made stronger by the

use of anathemas and horrified expressions of pious reprobation.

But it may be asked, Have we not in what has just been said been constantly referring to what the New Testament teaches? Is it not the witness to the spiritual realities which rest on a faith in Jesus? Is it not above all things the book of the Holy Ghost, the record of the Spirit's coming, the handbook of the Spirit's operations, the interpreter of the Spirit's work in our hearts? And we may at once reply, Yes, that is precisely what the New Testament is; but the danger comes in when, admitting that it is this, we begin to say that it is more than this. The New Testament is a collection of writings from the pens of a group of men who had just been the witnesses and recipients of the great crowning phase of God's revelation to the world. The principle on which these writings were collected and preserved, to the exclusion of many other writings which seemed superficially to be of the same kind, was, we may surmise, that every line should be kept from the men who had "seen the Lord," the men who had lived with Him in the flesh, or received a direct apostleship from His lips; they are essentially the records, or such records as survived in the middle of the Second Century, of those who had been the chosen witnesses of the Supreme Manifestation.

What we seem to want in the present day is the clear understanding that Christ Himself was the revelation, Christ "after the flesh," and still more the Christ after the Spirit. The writings which preserve the records of that revelation must not be confused with the revelation itself. So far as they have faithfully kept it for the after ages, so far as they are suffused with the Person of whom they speak, they may themselves be called in a secondary sense Revelation; but we must remember that they make no pretence to be infallible; in most cases the writers imply that they are writing as other authors write, and where they are conscious of delivering a special truth which has been communicated to them by God, they generally say so expressly, in order that they may not mix up with the revelation which they are conveying the things which they "speak as men."

Now if it does not sound too paradoxical a statement, Christ does not depend on the New Testament writings, but the New Testament writings depend on Him. There is a great event which comes between the Old Testament and the New; it is the fulfilment of the Old, and out of it the New Testament springs. That event, the coming of Christ, was preached to all nations under heaven, as an apostle says, and is yet being preached to all nations under heaven, not because it is written about in a certain book, but be-

cause it is a fact which verifies itself in human hearts and human lives. The New Testament is only part of the evidence on which that event rests, nor can it be called the most important part: the actual work of the Spirit must be recognised as more important than even the writings which were produced under the influence of the Spirit many centuries ago. But if the evidence of the New Testament is unduly exalted, still more if it is represented as the sole evidence of the great event, there necessarily follows a numbness to the spiritual facts which are put within the reach of believing souls; and the appeal is made not to them, but only to the book. The truth is we need a criterion in reading the New Testament just as the writers needed a criterion in writing it. That criterion is Christ Himself. And we must now present to our minds that Supreme Person, who was and is, and is to come, the beginning and the end, the Alpha and the Omega, as He is shown and demonstrated to us by all the evidence at our disposal. And when this Revelation of God is perceived and welcomed into our hearts and lives we can deal fairly with the New Testament writings just as the Apostles approached their composition in the realised experience of Him who had promised to be, and was, with them always. The Scriptures are meant to lead us to Christ, and in combination with a living presentation of Christ in

preaching and in the Christian society, they will accomplish their end; but when they have led us to Him He will enable us to estimate them.

What, then, is Christ? Let us answer the question by developing and articulating the facts. A simple peasant living at Nazara in Galilee, sprung of the ancient kingly stock of Israel, manifested as He grew up certain religious characteristics which made a deep impression on those who knew Him. His life was brief, and in the main uneventful, but He betrayed to those whom He chose as His friends the consciousness that He was the Messias, or Anointed One, whom His nation was expecting. To His intimates He also showed that He was one with the invisible God in a way which was quite new in religious experience; He identified Himself with God, and encouraged His friends to believe that seeing Him they saw God. After two or three years of life among His disciples whom He instructed in ethics and religion, He was crucified. Everything connected with His death, His foreknowledge of it, His conduct during the tragedy, and His words at the last, entirely convinced His followers that He was the Suffering Servant of whom the prophet had spoken, and that He was the antitype of the paschal lamb and all the sin-offerings of the Temple worship. They saw at once that He had come to give His life a ransom for

many ; they found a "new covenant in His blood," a redemption which might be offered to all who would accept it. But what gave point to this conviction was the fact that He rose from the dead, appeared and spoke to them, and told them to preach what they had seen. These men, after a memorable period of waiting and a striking spiritual experience, set about the task which had been put into their hands But now a very remarkable manifestation began to repeatedly occur. Those who received the message of pardon and peace through the crucified and risen Jesus came into a personal relation with Him, which, though independent of the senses, was perfectly distinct to consciousness, and produced upon them an effect which was to them blissful and to others unmistakable. The Risen One appeared in lives transformed ; and so obvious was this that the best evidence that He was risen seemed to be in these persons who were, so it was described, "risen with Him." [1] This inward experience of a cleansing from

[1] The following passage from Athanasius, *De Incarnatione Verbi Dei*, chap. xxx., illustrates the way in which Christians of the Third Century conceived the argument for Christianity : "If, as a matter of fact, one who is dead can effect nothing, but his influence lasts to the tomb and then ceases—deeds and actions affecting men belonging only to the living ; then let who wills see and be judge, acknowledging the truth from what is seen. For since the Saviour is effecting such great things among men, and is daily invisibly persuading so great a number on all sides, both from the dwellers in Greece and foreign lands, to embrace His faith, and all to be obedient to His teaching ; has any one still any

impurity and a power over sin could only be conceived as Christ dwelling in the heart; and the maintenance of the spiritual life by faith in Him could only be typified as bread of life and living water constantly received. This life lived by faith in the Son of God was perceived to be a life hidden in God, and the knowledge that they who had seen Christ had seen the Father was daily developing in the Christian experience, until the only way of adequately describing the God whom the Christian knew was to declare that He was the Father, the Son by whom the Father was revealed, and the Spirit taking of the things of Christ and showing them to the soul. The practice of a Christian life thus produced, with the consequent purifying of the moral nature and enlightenment of the understanding, led to clearer and firmer faith in the Being who had thus come to dwell in the souls of

doubt that the resurrection has been accomplished by the Saviour, and that Christ lives, or rather is Himself the Life? Is it, indeed, the part of a dead man to be piercing through the minds of men, so that they deny their ancestral laws and reverence the teaching of Christ? Or how, if at least He is no longer working (for this is the property of one dead), does He stop the working of those who are working and living, so that the adulterer no longer commits adultery, and the manslayer no longer commits murder, and the unrighteous no longer is avaricious, and the impious for the future becomes pious? Or how, if He did not rise again, but is still dead, does He drive away and persecute and cast down the false gods deemed by unbelievers to be alive, and the dæmons they worship? For where Christ is named, and His faith, there all idolatry is destroyed, and every deceit of dæmons is refuted, and no dæmon even endures the name, but on merely hearing it flees and departs. Now this is not the work of a dead man, but of a living—aye, of God."

His believing disciples. The conviction grew that the Redeemer of men would also be their Judge, and that the Maker of regenerate spirits was also the Creator of the world, in whose image man had really been made. Men were assured of their own resurrection from the dead by their experience of His, and they anticipated a future life which would consist in an eternal union with Him. From this conclusion concerning what is to be naturally followed the discovery of what had been, and the last, completing, touch of this new Truth was the doctrine that the Christ who had been among men in the flesh was the Word of God who had been in the bosom of the Father before the creation of the world.

To the question, then, What is Christ, as He is known from all the sources of evidence open to us? the answer may be given, Christ is the Redeeming and Saving Power of God manifested, as the ancient revelation dimly foresaw, in a human life of sacrifice and suffering, and operating now through a Spiritual Agency in the continual regeneration and perfecting of human souls. It may be said, of course, But this definition is just what you would gather from the New Testament. Certainly; but that is only because the writers of the New Testament had received it from experience—an experience which is equally open to us. And it is important to recognise that

it is derived, not so much from the New Testament as from the Source whence the New Testament derived it, because then we obtain a definite and real fact to serve as a criterion in judging the New Testament itself. It is the accordance of the New Testament with this spiritual reality that gives it its authenticity, and where in some comparatively unimportant points that accordance fails, there the authenticity of the writing disappears.

The writer is painfully aware how iconoclastic this view must appear to those who are bound fast in a dogma of inspiration. Such men require us all to admit their dogma before they will argue with us. Concede, they say, that the Scriptures are God's word, infallible, authentic, and complete, or we will have nothing to say to you. But, the perplexed inquirer says, will you give me proof of your great axiom? No, is the answer, we will not; you shall accept it as the first condition of the argument. With people in that position it is obviously impossible to reason; but it is perhaps time to tell them with all earnestness and frankness that they are taking not only an irrational, but an unscriptural ground, and that they are raising a grave doubt in many minds whether they have any real faith in the things which they so confidently affirm. Let this simple question be addressed to them: Do you really believe that

Christ is a living Person to whom whosoever will may come, and that the Holy Spirit is a real Power working immediately on the hearts and the consciences of men? For, if you actually believe this, how can you hesitate to admit that the Lord Himself takes precedence of the book, and that the book is to be estimated by the living Spirit that is with us? These sturdy champions of an unreasoning dogma are not asked to give up their Scriptures, but only to recognise that He of whom the Scriptures speak is more real, more living, more infallible, more immediate, more present than any, even the best, writings can be, and that He is indeed the censor and the interpreter of the writings themselves.

Now they who have grasped the distinction which has been made, and therefore understand the certainty and reality of Christ Himself, can turn with a quiet and a candid mind to an impartial examination of the several New Testament writings, and try to estimate how much, and in what way, each one of them contributes to the manifestation of Christ, who Himself is, as we have been urging, the Crown of God's revelation, the supreme and sufficient mirror in which the nature of God and the ideal nature of man are reflected and blended; who is for this reason the Light of the World, the Way and the Truth and the Life; and who must therefore be the standard by which we try even the books that testify of Him.

CHAPTER IX.

THE MEMOIRS OF JESUS.

"I esteem the Gospels to be thoroughly genuine, for there shines forth from them the reflected splendour of a sublimity, proceeding from the person of Jesus Christ, of so Divine a kind as only the Divine could ever have manifested upon earth."—GOETHE.

BETWEEN thirty and forty years after the Crucifixion of Jesus—the exact date it is not possible to ascertain—the apostles and apostolic men perceived the necessity of writing down the memorials of their Master's life and death. At first the things which He had said and done seemed so vivid in their memory, and the call to be constantly proclaiming them seemed so good a security of their preservation, that written records would appear superfluous.[1]

[1] Cf. Eusebius' statement about John: *Ἰωάννην φασὶ τὸν πάντα χρόνον ἀγράφῳ κεχρημένον κηρύγματι τέλος ἐπὶ τὴν γραφὴν ἐλθεῖν.* It is necessary to remind ourselves that to publish a book was not so obvious an undertaking in the peasant circles of Galilee or Jerusalem as it is to us. The notes of the Lord's doings and sayings had, we may surmise, been long put down by the apostles for their private use before any one of them thought of collecting and editing them in a connected form.

According to the earliest tradition it was Matthew who took the initiative in compiling memoirs of his Master; he had preached chiefly to Jews, and when he saw his way to proclaim the gospel amongst people of a different kind he committed the substance of his preaching to paper in the Hebrew language. He wrote out, we need not question, the way in which he was accustomed to preach Christ from the Ancient Scriptures by showing how this and that prophecy had been fulfilled in Him, and he wrote out a number of the Lord's discourses which were imprinted almost word for word on his own memory and on the minds of many others who had seen and heard the Lord. We may surmise that Matthew's preaching had never attempted to set forth a chronological account of the life, nor had it marked very distinctly the occasion or circumstances of each event or discourse. It was such an utterance or series of utterances as one might expect from a fervent disciple who was neither a profound student of the ancient Scriptures nor an accomplished literary workman, but was overwhelmingly charged with the spirit and power of the Lord who had commissioned him to preach. It is generally supposed that our Gospel according to St. Matthew is the Greek version of this first evangelic narrative. It certainly bears some marks of such an origin as is here suggested.

Our second Gospel had, we may gather from the fragment of Papias quoted by Eusebius,[1] a similar origin. Its author was one who served the Apostle Peter as an interpreter, and jotted down his reminiscences of the Lord's life as he was in the habit of narrating them in his preaching. The interpreter probably translated the Apostle's Aramaic vernacular into the Hellenistic dialect, which was the *lingua franca* of the time.

Our third Gospel sufficiently describes its own origin in its opening sentences; it is a painstaking compilation of the several memoirs and reminiscences of those who had seen and known Jesus, made by one who had enjoyed good opportunities of communication with these earliest witnesses. The fourth Gospel may be left for a later stage in our investigation.

We see, then, what the three Synoptic Gospels are according to their own claims and the assertions made about them by primitive writers. They are, as Justin Martyr generally calls them in his apologetic writings, *Memoirs* of the Lord.[2] They do not profess to be accurate in a chronological or a

[1] *Hist. Eccl.* iii. 39. Μάρκος μὲν ἑρμηνευτὴς Πέτρου γενόμενος, ὅσα ἐμνημόνευσεν, ἀκριβῶς ἔγραψεν οὐ μέντοι τάξει τὰ ὑπὸ τοῦ χριστοῦ ἢ λεχθέντα ἢ πραχθέντα.

[2] *E.g.*, *Apol.* i. chap. 66, p. 98 B. Οἱ γὰρ ἀπόστολοι ἐν τοῖς γενομένοις ὑπ' αὐτῶν ἀπομνημονεύμασιν, ἃ καλεῖται εὐαγγέλια, οὕτως παρέδωκαν κ.τ.λ.

historical sense, still less do they lay claim to be divinely guaranteed against error; nay, they do not even make any pretence to inspiration in any special sense. They present themselves to us as authentic memoirs written, as Justin Martyr says, by the Apostles or their immediate successors.[1]

All the difficulties which have been found in the Gospels during the last half-century of stormy criticism, and all the scepticism which has been excited concerning them, must be attributed to the well-meant endeavours of the Church to represent the Gospels as something more than they claim to be. The evangelists have been represented as the mere amanuenses of the Spirit of God; their infallibility has been made a point of faith; to question it has been represented as undermining the Gospel itself. The intention was good; the idea was that in honouring the writers we should be honouring Him of whom they wrote, and that by artificially surrounding their authority with a mysterious sanction of inspiration we should protect and establish the truth which they deliver. It is as if some ardent Cromwellians, eager to secure the reputation of their hero, had insinuated the dogma that Carlyle's life of him was infallibly inspired. But the well-meant

[1] *Dial.* c. 103, p. 331 D. *Ὑπὸ τῶν ἀποστόλων αὐτοῦ καὶ τῶν ἐκείνοις παρακολουθησάντων.*

endeavour has entirely failed of its object. Well meant, no doubt, it was, but it was unnecessary, and has proved to be mischievous. For every fault of the narratives, every obscurity, or trivial contradiction, has thus been charged upon the Holy Ghost, and antagonists of the faith, instead of being confronted with the obvious truths contained in the Gospels, have been encouraged to lay hold of the difficulties in them, and to rest their rejection of the whole on their dubiety concerning a part. In our own day a well-known scientific writer has been allowed to draw the attention of multitudes from the essential issues by criticising the possession of the swine at Gadara, and orthodoxy, committed to its great dogma, has felt bound to vindicate the story against the criticism with the desperate feeling that, if one statement in the Gospels is challenged, Christ and His salvation are called in question. Indeed, few dogmas could have been more unfortunate than this dogma about the infallible inspiration of the evangelists. For at last the quiet question is put, even by reverent believers, What proof have you of this infallible inspiration? Do the writers claim it themselves? No. Do other writers of the New Testament, St. Paul, or St. Peter, claim it for them? No. On what, then, does it rest? And at last the poor and insufficient answer is forced to come out, We

have no reason to give except the arbitrary dogma of the Church, and we suppose the dogma was invented as a security for the truth of Jesus.

Now the simple fact seems to be this: the record of Jesus, His Person, His ways, His words, His works, is so marvellous, so unique, so Divine, that it has cast its glory over the recorders. Writings which tell so mighty a tale must themselves be mighty. The vehicle of such a revelation must surely be itself a revelation. This is where the mistake has arisen. But the wisdom of God has decided far otherwise. The greatest revelation of all, the Person and Life and Death of Jesus, the Son of God, requires for its record nothing but the simple witness of those who saw and heard. There is no need of an Isaiah, nor even of a Paul. The splendour of human genius, the interposition of exceptional gifts, would here be out of place, and would obscure rather than illustrate the matter in hand. Let the great Fact—so the wisdom of God seems to say—be simply reflected in the unimaginative, uncreative minds of a few unlettered men; let their limited intelligence be burdened only with the task of remembering, and let their memories find a way into writing as time goes on, so that the portrait of the Saviour, taken as it were unconsciously, may in this artless way pass down to posterity. That portrait shall not be the

work of great painters, but rather a photographic impression, drawn by the finger of light on the hearts of those who were exposed to His loveliness, holiness, power, and love.

In taking this view of our Synoptic Gospels, in placing them on the plane of unsophisticated and unreflective historical memoir, we are, it is to be observed, only following such indications as they give themselves. In surrendering the far more imposing dogmatic assumptions which have come down to us by tradition, we not only return from tradition to Scripture, but we quietly slip by all those criticisms and questions which have in recent years been directed, not against the Gospels themselves, but against the theory of the Gospels gradually developed by the Church. But those who slumber in the lethargy of dogmatism start up with a cry. If the evangelists are not divinely inspired, we have lost our Lord; we know Him only in these records; how shall we be assured that the records are true unless we are first convinced that they are written by God? The answer to this cry of alarm, which it is the object of the present chapter to give, may be summed up in three brief statements, afterwards to be enforced and developed.

First, the Lord is not taken away, but truly presented in authentic contemporary records. Second,

the truth of the picture is guaranteed not by the writers, but by the picture itself. Third, the whole gist of the testimony given by these records is that the subject of them is alive and is among His people now, and therefore we are brought to a very plain issue, which is this: if He is alive and active and recognised among us now, how can it be said that His reality rests on the authority of any ancient writers? And if He is not alive and active and recognised among us now, of what avail is a writing, even infallibly inspired, which bears it as its constant burden, that He should live and be with His people to the end of the world?

In a word, the answer to the terrified cry of a disturbed dogmatism is briefly this: the Gospels are a historical witness to a Living Christ; their revelation consists of the picture which they present of Him; they are verified by Him, not He by them.

First of all, then, let us steadily realise that we claim nothing for the Three Gospels now under consideration, but that they are the honest reports delivered to posterity by those who saw it of the most memorable life ever lived upon earth. There is in them, as all readers who are not hardened against them by dogmatic presuppositions have observed, a simplicity and directness which admit of only one explanation. There is no trace of the art which is

constructing a work of the imagination; there are none of the familiar marks of legend; the idea that the stories were the gradual growth of legend had to yield to the hard fact that between the events and the records there was no time for a legend to grow. Never was there a more sober historical document than the Gospel of Luke. Using all the materials which are in his hands, the author sits down to compile as complete a record of the life as he possibly could. The Gospel of Mark—we may well challenge the judgment of every unbiassed mind—is transparently drawn from the life. Let any one sit down in a quiet hour and read through without stopping this brief harmonious story of the public life lived by Jesus during the three years of His ministry, and the impression cannot be avoided—not only the subject matter, but the very modes of expression, the minute touches of verisimilitude, the little flashes of observation that occur only to those who have been present and have seen, confirm it—that this is a faithful tale drawn from the facts themselves. And though Matthew has neither the vividness of Mark, nor the historical manner of Luke, it carries an unmistakable authenticity of its own; it teems with λόγια, as Papias called them, the utterances of Jesus, and we may well ask of any critic, How could these discourses have come into existence? Could they be invented by a

writer of the calibre of this evangelist? Are they ingenious products of the study and of the literary hack? The question answers itself. The very substance of the first Gospel is the proof that the writer is simply the recorder of what was said and done.

Indeed the authenticity of these unsophisticated biographies would never have been challenged if we had not asserted of them that they are something more than they are. They would have stood on the same unquestioned footing as the other biographical notices which have come down to us from antiquity, if we would have let them occupy that ground, and they would have delivered their witness to Him of whom they speak without distracting any attention from Him to themselves; they would have remained in their joyful self-effacement, anonymous, unpretentious, pointing with simple unanimity of heart to Him. Nothing better could be wished for them than that they might come to us afresh, among the writings of Josephus and Philo, or side by side with Seneca and Suetonius, asking us simply to examine them as writings of antiquity; and immediately the surpassing splendour of their contents would take captive this present age, as it did that Second Century in which they first became widely known.

But it may be said, apart from all extravagant claims which have been made for the verbal and

infallible inspiration of the writings, the miraculous element in them would have ensured their rejection by modern scientific minds. Is this, however, quite so certain as it seems? When a scientifically trained man is asked in a bare and bald way to accept a miracle like that of feeding the Five Thousand on the ground that a document is divinely inspired, it is quite possible that he may inquire very severely into the inspiration of the document, and when it appears that the belief in its inspiration rests only on an unsupported dogma, may impatiently push aside the document and the miracle which it records. But supposing he is asked to take up these biographical documents and to form a fair conception of the Person described in them, to piece together His teaching, His conduct, the effects of His work, His influence in subsequent history, and then to consider whether He is not Himself a Supernatural Fact, a Being who in His uniqueness presents Himself as a revelation of God, it is by no means a foregone conclusion that our scientific man, supposing him to be perfectly candid and logical, will dismiss the miracles in that summary way; it is not impossible that he may regard the miracles, in the light of the Person, not only as probable, but as inevitable.

The settled *à priori* conviction that a supernatural manifestation of God to His creatures is impossible

cannot of course be met by any argument or any proof. If a man has once accepted it as an axiom his mind is no longer open to any processes of reasoning, and even tangible facts presented to him as proof would only be thrust aside as illusions. It is a condition of mind parallel to that of one who has set his heart against his own child, and is further exasperated by every attempt at reconciliation, interpreting every advance of affection or desire as an added proof of perversity, and a new ground of displeasure. But the point to be remembered is this, that where the scientific mind is still open and not committed to this irrational prejudice, the most probable way of convincing it is to present these records of the life of Jesus simply as records, on the ground of their admitted authenticity of date and scope and authorship, claiming for them nothing more than they claim for themselves, and then to leave the story to produce its own effect. Immediately the candid and logical mind is struck by the Person presented in the records. Following out the influence of the life in the history of the world, he feels the necessity of explaining the results which flowed from a cause so apparently simple. And as he comes to grapple seriously with the problem he is led to admit the supernaturalness of Jesus, and incidentally the possibility of His miraculous works

and His Resurrection, in order to escape the hopeless mental predicament in which he must be landed if he denies them.

But while we may fearlessly contend for the authenticity and historical veracity of these three memoirs, it is obvious to any reader who carefully compares them with one another that they are subject to many of the infirmities which are incident to all human compositions and to all human testimony. Even in so vital a matter as the Beatitudes of the Kingdom the first and the third evangelists give decidedly different versions. In describing the cure of a blind man at Jericho one account represents the single blind man as two. The very inscription on the Cross is differently worded by the different writers. And, when we come to the records of the Resurrection, every careful student is aware how difficult it is to piece the several versions together into anything like a consistent narrative. But when we have frankly admitted and firmly grasped the fact that these are memoirs, such recollections of the events as would be current among the disciples of the first and second generation after Jesus, these marks of ordinary biographical and historical writings will occasion the believer no difficulty, and will not allow the unbeliever to question the substantial truth of the record as a whole. Here is an illustration ready

to hand. Writing in a current magazine, a war correspondent,[1] Mr. Archibald Forbes, who was present at the battle of Sedan on September 1 and 2, 1870, mentions how completely at variance the several accounts of the battle are. After the lapse of twenty-two years it is impossible to determine with accuracy innumerable points of detail. The eye-witnesses, the official reports, the notes of correspondents, disagree. The order of events, the precise time of the several incidents, the exact number of people present on a given occasion, cannot be determined. And yet what person would be foolish enough to question the historic fact of Sedan because of these divergent testimonies? The battle was fought; the German Empire of to-day, and the sore feeling in France about Alsace and Lorraine, are witnesses which would outweigh a thousand discrepancies in the narrative. And so it is with the accounts of the Resurrection. The great fact is not disturbed by the somewhat incoherent description of its incidents. The power of the Risen One; the world transformed by His influence; myriads of living persons who are conscious of being risen with Christ through faith in His resurrection which happened centuries ago, would outweigh many more difficulties than are actually found in the narrative.

[1] *Nineteenth Century*, March, 1892.

We may regard with a certain detachment of feeling the fierce discussions about points of detail in the Gospels. It is quite possible we may say that St. Luke, for example, may have made a blunder about the date of Quirinius' procuratorship of Syria,[1] and have supposed that, because he was commissioner for the enrolment of names in the year when Q. Sentius Saturninus was the *præses* of Syria, he was already *præses* himself, though history shows us that he did not occupy that position until ten years later, viz., 6–11 A.D. The birth of our Lord at the time of that enrolment is not discredited because an author, writing half a century later, had forgotten, or had no document at hand to show, that Quirinius

[1] Mommsen (*Res gestæ Augusti*, 125) indulges in a sneer at the theologians who try to show that this census took place at all in the year 4 B.C. And for this a recent writer in France, Père Didon, takes him to task (see *Jésus Christ*, App. A., p. 817); but this brilliant Catholic author furnishes fresh material for the historian's sarcasm when he tries to show that the clause in Luke ii. 1, ἡγεμονέυοντος τῆς Συρίας Κυρηνίου, meant, "When Quirinius was the special commissioner for the enrolment in Syria." No doubt, as Meyer shows in his commentary on the passage, that is the actual fact, but that is not what St. Luke says. He says that the enrolment was made while Quirinius was the *præses* of Syria; and that position he did not hold till ten years afterwards. It is the perversity of the false dogmatism on the subject of inspiration which leads even a candid mind like Père Didon to rescue the historical accuracy of Luke by maintaining that his words, which say one thing, distinctly mean another. On this method of interpretation all writers are infallible. If one attributes an event of 1834 to Queen Victoria's reign, it may be justified as meaning that it means the fifteenth year of her age, though King William was on the throne.

was not at the time Augustus' *legatus* for the government of Syria, but only his agent for the holding of a provincial census. The idea that the Holy Ghost would supply a writer with an accurate chronology, and would make careful historical research unnecessary, or correct the errors where the research had been insufficient, is one entirely imported into the question by irresponsible dreamers. The preface of St. Luke's own Gospel shows that he never entertained such an idea; and we may surmise that if he himself were confronted with the facts which are known to us, and asked to explain his statement, "this enrolment was made when Quirinius was governor of Syria," he would say at once, "I made a mistake; of course his *præsidium* of Syria did not begin till ten years later."

But we may pass now to the second point which may be advanced to reassure the trembling believer who thinks that we are taking away his Lord because we have no ground for asserting that the evangelists are infallible. The truth of the picture is guaranteed not by the writers who depict the life of Jesus, but by the picture itself. A few flaws in the plate or in the printing of the cartes do not affect the image which the light draws in a photograph. No fallibility of the witnesses, no infirmity of their memory or of their pen, can materially affect the picture which, as it seems

almost involuntarily, they present of their Lord. Their simplicity, their artlessness—nay, we might almost say their rusticity, against which clever critics have frequently railed, are themselves the guarantee that they are simply telling what they saw and handled. They could not have invented, for it is all they can do to imperfectly depict, that Person, His matchless beauty and goodness, and the power which breathed from His word and work. The supreme value of these very humble witnesses is that with all their minor divergences, and with all their obvious limitations of understanding and expression, they do put us at a point of view from which we can with unclouded eyes see Jesus, as He came and passed through the few brief years of His earthly life. Thanks to them and to God's Spirit, working through them, impelling them to write and quickening their memory, we find ourselves at small disadvantage as compared with those who saw with their eyes and heard with their ears Jesus in the flesh.

Now it is this Person, the *tout ensemble* of His life and character, which is the great Revelation of God. It is this Person who, patiently studied and understood, seems to step out of the simple pages and approach the reader with a majesty which commands, and a tenderness which allures, all but the hardest and most corrupt of human hearts. Men brought up

like John Stuart Mill in a traditional contempt for the religion of Jesus have even in a time of most unimaginative materialism been arrested by the Person in these Gospels and constrained to say that they could think of no better rule of life than so to act as would win the approval of Jesus. Light-hearted *littérateurs* like Ernest Renan have, along the lines of simple historical inquiry, met the Person in these Gospels and been compelled to utter a cry of admiration and love, and to sing His praises in prose, which owing to the subject seems to rise into verse, with an ardour which would evidently pass into faith but for the arbitrary presupposition in the mind of the investigator that whatever in the great Person is Divine and therefore saving, must be quietly put aside as incredible. And men who have not been poisoned by the baseless dogma of Science that the Supernatural does not exist, and therefore all that is supernatural in Jesus is fiction, men who with open heart have submitted themselves to the impression which the Person of the Gospels makes have found themselves obliged to exclaim with one or another of the disciples in the record, now, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord;" now, "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God;" now, "Lord, to whom shall we go? for thou hast the words of eternal life;" now, after a moment of misgiving or doubt, "My Lord and my God;" and

now in a passion of surrender, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." It would be vain to make an attempt to enumerate all the people on whom the Gospels have produced this powerful effect. The Person in the written pages speaks to them as a real and living voice, and sways them as a seen and acknowledged Lord. The words are read—"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest": we lose sight of the book and of the writer, we attend only to Him who speaks. We come to Him, and He gives us rest.

Now it is not a little extraordinary that a vehicle apparently so inartistic and so incomplete should produce such an effect on following generations of men. We can point to no other records of a life, even though they may be far more finished, more detailed, more exact, which have the vital result of bringing us into spiritual contact with the Person of whom they speak. Many of us have read with tearful eyes the *Memorabilia* of Socrates, or the great description which the gifted disciple gives of his master's death in the *Phædo*; but while we lovingly admire the noble and indomitable sage, it does not occur to us to come to him; indeed, it did not occur to him to invite us. Or to take a much more modern instance, we have studied that curious and fascinating picture of a beautiful soul drawn from within, the

Journal of Amiel; his exquisite words haunt the ear, and the story of his pensive life, his pure meditations, his wise and critical observations, the tragic overclouding of his declining days, touches us with a tender human sympathy, and makes us reach out yearning hands of brotherhood to his melancholy shade; but which of us thinks of coming to him? Wise counsellor and sober teacher in many delicate issues of life we may admit him to be, but he does not draw us. He dies a kind of silent martyrdom, but it gives us no hope in our hours of need. The marvellous and inexplicable fact about the Person of the Gospels is, that it draws us; we find ourselves unconsciously in the crowd trying to touch the hem of His garment; we involuntarily take a place at His feet and feel that we have chosen the good part which cannot be taken away; His death told in simple but impressive detail holds us with a singular spell; like the little children to whom Robert Elsmere tells the story of the Cross, we break into sobs and tears—we know it is for us; we go to the tomb, and unlike the curiously insensible disciples, we feel that it was not possible for Him to be holden of death; the brief cry, "He is risen," penetrates our heart with a subtle hope; He seems risen for our justification, and a quickening faith enables us to be crucified and buried with Him, and to rise also with Him to newness of life.

We take up these dear records of His life and death again and again ; we read and re-read the words that He spoke ; we meditate afresh upon His many works of healing and mercy, His few works of severity and judgment. What is there in them? We thought we knew them almost by heart ; they are familiar to us as the sky and the woods and the sea ; but they are always new. Some miracle or sign which once seemed difficult to believe is constantly passing into the category of the credible as our understanding of Him rounds and grows. If there are some things which still seem to us incredible we can leave them cheerfully aside, for we count it an irreverence to attribute to the Person whom we are getting to know anything which is out of harmony with the character as we know it. The Cross is always breaking upon us in new aspects and new phases, like a mountain peak which is eternal, but never the same for two hours together in the passing of cloud or the outbreak of sunshine, the gathering of the treasures of the snow or the unsealing of the fountains which are to water the vale. His words too—they are spirit and life, and we are always saying with a fresh emphasis, "Never man spake like this man." Some simple apophthegm of His is constantly piercing down to the roots of our life, or some lovely parable will quietly unveil a spacious landscape of unnoticed truth. We study

the Sermon on the Mount for a lifetime, and in the second sight and brightening intuition of an old age which has passed from godliness to godliness, we begin to perceive with awe that we have understood but the surface of it, and have never sounded its depths. We turn back again and again to His summary of the Law and the Prophets, and with every sorrowful failure, every painful discovery how little we love, how little we seem capable of loving, we come back to Him and say, Master, Thou hast well said: to love God with all our hearts and our neighbour as ourselves is the clearness and joy of heaven; Lord, teach us to love. And how often, when with a foolish optimism and a shallow misconception of the solemn facts which form the underground of life, we have thought to minimise or explain away some of His searching severities, His words about the fire which is not quenched and the worm which does not die, we have been constrained to come humbly back to His feet with the surprised confession that He knew best!

Now it is this Person of the Gospels—and not merely the sketchy portrait of Him—which is the great revelation of God. "All things have been delivered unto me of my Father, and no one knoweth the Son save the Father; neither doth any know the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to

reveal him" (Matt. xi. 27). It is the Person who could say this, who could realise, too, what He said that strikes all criticism dumb. All that is told about Him gathers round what He is. Miracle and sign are not given as proofs of what He is, but they seem to flow by a kind of inner necessity from Him who uttered those wonderful words. We do not believe in the Divinity of Jesus because of the miraculous conception mentioned in the first chapter of Matthew; rather we are forced by the conviction of His Divinity to believe in that manner of His birth. If He was born in the common way of human generation the miracle of what He is seems too transcendent for human faith.

It is indeed a strange conceit that any artificial guarantee is needed for the Person presented in these Gospels. To prop His authenticity by a dogma about the infallibility of the evangelists is like trying to shore up Mont Blanc, and to keep it from falling with a few pine logs hewn from its ridges. We may joyfully anticipate the day when Christians will surrender their puerile apologetics, their attempts to verify the eternal Truth by a paltry fiction which is pricked like a bubble by the first touch of inquiry.

> Non tali auxilio, non defensoribus istis
> Tempus eget.

Some day we shall let the evangelists again tell

their own tale, without our impertinent prelude of tales about them ; and an astonished world will see again in these *Memoirs of Jesus* the unmistakable reflection of the Jesus whom the disciples saw.

But still the strongest answer to a timorous belief remains. The abiding reason why the frank admission of what the Gospels are cannot take away our Lord is this : the Person of whom the Gospels tell is nothing if He is not a living and active presence now. All that is said of Him, and all that He is reported to have said, is naught unless He gave the distinct promise that wherever two or three were gathered in His name there He would be in the midst of them. The Gospels are mere waste-paper, or at least of no more practical religious value than the *Memorabilia* of Xenophon or the *Journal of Amiel*, unless we may accept literally the assertion, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world." Did He say that ? Does He fulfil that saying ? That is the vital question, and not, whether Matthew was a sacred penman miraculously guaranteed against the possibility of error. Now we may conceive the three Gospels as in effect three witnesses from the age after the Resurrection, eagerly asserting that the Lord had risen, had appeared to one or another of His disciples, had finally disappeared, but only on such terms that His presence with His people

would be perpetual and unbroken. If the Gospels in asserting this are maintaining a lie, let them be ruthlessly thrown aside. Some good Christians seem to think that the only proof they have of the assertion is the statement of the evangelists, and their timid anxiety to maintain the infallibility of the Gospels arises from a fearful conviction that if those books were lost the Living Christ would be lost. Orthodoxy of this type, it is almost unnecessary to repeat, rests on a profound and radical unbelief. Its champions are sceptics who can attach no meaning to the great saying, "I am with you," except this, that a written word is with them, a Book infallibly inspired and miraculously preserved. But what we may call the orthodoxy of the first Christian century—the century before the New Testament was written—is becoming again the orthodoxy of the Nineteenth Century, the century in which the cramped doctrine of Biblical infallibility has become doubtful. Men are beginning to believe again the mighty truth that Jesus lives and is with them even now. A hard and incredulous materialism, created largely by a hard and essentially sceptical Christianity, says still with a sneer, Where is your Lord? Show Him to us if He indeed be alive. And we answer not by an appeal to documents which unbelief will not accept as an authority, but by an appeal to facts which

unbelief itself may ignore but cannot deny. We may boldly venture all on the fact that *Jesus lives and is among us now*. If the doubter will not take the trouble to examine the details of religious history, if he will not test the reality of Christ's saving presence in the lives which have been redeemed by Him, in the miserable rescued by Him from their misery, in the bad turned by Him into the good—we must at least insist upon it that he should try for himself whether Jesus lives before he commits himself to his arbitrary negation. The first apostles went to convert the world not with a New Testament in their hands, for it was only their labours which resulted in the production of the New Testament, but with the risen Christ in their hearts, and with a power not their own, which was able to bring Jews and Gentiles alike into a personal contact with this living Saviour. That is precisely the method which is needed to-day. If these pages fall under the eye of an unbeliever, of one who is a stranger to Christ, they have a message for him, direct and simple as that which Peter preached at Pentecost. This message thrusts aside as irrelevant the thousand and one pleas and objections which unbelief is accustomed to urge, and comes at once to the point. Jesus, the living Saviour, bids you come unto Him with the promise that He will save you. "But how?" you say; "I cannot see Him"

No, but as a spiritual presence He is at hand and accessible to your spirit. "But," you object, "I do not believe in His Divinity." No, but what He asks is that you should believe in Him, and He puts no metaphysical tests in the way of your accepting Him. "But I do not believe in the miracles, the story of the birth, and the rest." He is here, not speaking of these, but of His power to save you; will you come unto Him that you may receive life? If you *will*, He gives you life; if you will not, you are without life. "But," still you exclaim, "I do not believe in the atonement." When He bids you come unto Him He does not demand a theological definition or the acceptance of a religious formula. He says that He came to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many. He says that His blood was shed for you and for many for the remission of sins. The question is, will you trust the love of God, will you accept the remission of sins which Jesus offers, will you take your position as a pardoned and reconciled child of God in Christ Jesus?

Where a man has learnt his own weakness and sinfulness and need, where in consequence he humbles himself as a little child, he comes to Jesus in one brief and heartfelt prayer. Jesus is unseen, but His presence is acknowledged, and He is received. And as many as receive Him get power

to become the sons of God, even as many as believe on His name. Now, the whole of our subsequent investigation of the New Testament writings will tend to show that the very essence of this Gospel was the proclamation of a living Christ, whose living power was ordinarily manifested in the persons of men and women who gave admission to Him. If the value of these first three memoirs of the Lord is that they present us with a tolerably accurate picture of Jesus as He lived and died upon earth, and rose again from the grave, and ascended into heaven, they are only the introduction to a series of writings which derive all their value from the witness they give to this resurrection life of Jesus. "And it came to pass, while he blessed them he parted from them, and was carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple, blessing God." That is how the third and latest of the three closes the narrative. The Risen One has left His disciples, and yet He has not left them disconsolate. There is an attitude of expectation; there is a breathless pause. He has gone, but He is not far away; He will be with us still. The following books of the New Testament show in a variety of ways how this expectation is fulfilled. If the first three Gospels are a revelation of God in the person, the human person,

of Jesus, they lead immediately up to the revelation of Jesus Himself, prolonged in the work, the experience, the faith of His chosen disciples and their successors. The memoirs of Jesus were closed, nothing more could be added; nothing has been added except a few trifling recollections preserved by St. Paul, and the treasure of reminiscence in the Gospel of St. John. The brief beautiful life on earth was rounded and set like a triple cameo-image in a simple frame, to last as long as man is on the earth. But the saving life of Jesus was only just beginning; it manifested itself in certain normal and sufficient ways in the apostolic days, and the New Testament writings are the record of it. It still manifests itself, for the most part strictly along the lines of that New Testament literature, but by no means necessarily confined to them. The revelation of God in the face of Christ Jesus is perpetuated in the life of the Church, the saints in whom He has dwelt, the teachers, the martyrs, the heroes, whom He has inspired. And by a not unnatural figure the whole sum total of redeemed beings in whom He has manifested, or will still manifest, Himself to the end of time, may be treated as the body, the limbs, of which He is the head.

Perhaps it was with some glimmering consciousness of this that one of the evangelists, the one who

echoed Peter's teaching, gave to his brief record of the human life the singular title, "The *beginning* of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." A beginning indeed, and yet if we may be pardoned the paradox, a complete beginning.

In closing this chapter it may be permissible to appeal to the guardians of the letter of Scripture, and to ask them whether the truth does not begin to dawn upon them that God has provided a more substantial protection of His revelation than the traditional dogmatisms which once seemed strong, but now are sufficiently worm-eaten and insecure. Would not believers in Christ commend Him best to the world if they really believed in Him, and ventured to fall back on the promises which He has given? Are believers quite sure that they are not themselves the main cause of the world's unbelief? Have they not demanded faith in a book, where Christ meant them to demand faith in a Person? Have they not led the world astray in a weary conflict about literary details, with dull reiteration declaring that that is the word of God which is not the word of God, so that men have not seen the true Word of God that was with God from the beginning, and became flesh, and tabernacled amongst us? If they would only understand that Jesus lives, and present Him living to the weary and sinful humanity around them, would not all men be drawn to Him?

CHAPTER X.

THE FOUNDING OF THE CHURCH.

THE *Acts of the Apostles* is the record of the founding of the Church. Its opening words connect it with the third Gospel. There is no reason to question that the two works proceed from the same pen, or that the same method of historical research and collation prevails in the later book which was deliberately adopted by the author, according to his own statement (Luke i. 1, &c.) in the earlier. The evangelist had done his best to give a full and particular account of all that Jesus *began* to do and to teach, and in this supplementary history he endeavoured to show what Jesus continued to do and to teach after He was received up into heaven. But it may be at once noticed that this opening passage which forms the point of juncture between the two works, gives us a clear indication that the author lays no claim to infallibility. In the simplest and most

natural way *he corrects himself.* When he wrote the Gospel he had been under the impression that the Ascension had taken place immediately after the Resurrection. If we observe the marks of time in chap. xxiv.—"that very day," ver. 13; "that very hour," ver. 33; "as they spake these things," ver. 36; "and he led them out," ver. 50 — we cannot doubt that the author looked on all these events as compressed into a few hours. When he approached his second treatise he was better informed, and knew that for six weeks or so after the Resurrection the Risen Lord manifested Himself to His disciples, as if to accustom them to the idea of His continued life, before He passed into the invisibility of His heavenly reign. Where an author thus corrects himself, and admits new information to modify a statement that he has previously written, we certainly learn to trust him more as an honest writer, but we feel at once the absurdity of ascribing the qualities of infallibility and inerrancy to his work. Now, if our author had laid claim to infallibility, if he had professed to receive his information from the lips of God, as Mohammed does in the Koran, we should certainly be in a great dilemma. A mistake in historical statement, a contradiction, an inaccuracy, would be appalling, for it would mean that either God had made the error or the author was an impostor. But

how gratuitous it is, when Luke is so perfectly humble, transparent, and simple in his claims, to raise other claims for him, and to overwhelm him with confusion by declaring that he is what he never pretended to be, when the facts show that what he pretended to be he is! Whatever handle Scepticism or Rationalism has found in assailing the book, has been put into the hand of the enemy by the gross and baseless theory of the dogma that declares the supernatural authorship of the Biblical books in defiance of all the declarations and obvious facts of the Bible itself. The frank surrender of that hurtful dogma will be the beginning of a new era of faith in the Bible and its revelation.

St. Luke—for we may give the author the familiar name which an unbroken tradition has preserved—comes before us as an honest historian wishing to tell us the story of the first thirty years after his Divine Lord had left the earth. The earliest reference to the book in ancient literature is made by Irenæus, writing towards the end of the Second Century (182–188 A.D.); and this is the gist of the claim advanced for it—Luke told the truth, and no one can convince him of unveracity.[1] Irenæus says

[1] Neque Lucam mendacem esse possunt ostendere veritatem nobis cum omni diligentia annuntiantem. (*Cont. Heres.* iii. 15, § 1.)

nothing of a miraculous guarantee that every fact narrated should be correct. Inspiration, as modern theologians have conceived it, is not the basis of Luke's authority. But speaking of Luke, just as we might speak to-day of Dr. Johnson or any other well-known writer who lived a century ago, Irenæus says that he was truthful, and his veracity was not open to dispute. It may be said with much reason that "to announce the truth with all diligence" is due to inspiration, and that all truth comes from Him who is the Truth; but the point to insist on is that neither Luke himself, nor the first witness to Luke in Christian literature—Irenæus—is concerned to claim anything more for the Acts of the Apostles, than such veracity as a diligent and honest man can manifest in collecting and compiling the events of the generation to which he himself belongs, or of the one immediately preceding it. There is, however, an exceptional guarantee for correctness in this narrative—at all events, in the later parts, where we are permitted to accompany St. Paul in his apostolic journeys. This guarantee is referred to by Irenæus in just the same way that we should attribute an additional authority to an honest writer who had actually been present, let us say, at the occurrences of the French Revolution. Luke, in the simplest way, betrays the fact that he was a companion of St. Paul in parts of

his work.[1] He joined the Apostle at Troas in his first missionary enterprise beyond the borders of Asia (Acts xvi. 10), and was with him at intervals during the remainder of the story until the arrival and settlement in Rome.

Here, then, is a historical memoir, written by one who saw some of the things which he narrates, and must have had ready access to materials for telling the rest of his story. Without attempting to determine the date of the composition, for which we have no satisfactory evidence, except the abrupt and apparently inconclusive termination of the narrative, combined with the fact that the author was a witness of the later part of his story, we may say: This is the way in which the early story of the Church was conceived in the last quarter of the First Century of our Era. That many events were already obscured by distance is only natural; that some had to rest on more or less imperfect evidence is inevitable; that the views and beliefs of the generation in which the book saw the light occasionally obtrude themselves on the narrative, need not be denied. But the

[1] Omnibus his cum adesset Lucas diligenter conscripsit ea uti neque mendax neque elatus deprehendi possit. (*Cont. Hæres.* iii. 14, § 1.) The "neque elatus" seems to refer to the modesty in marking his own part in the Apostolic history by simply using the word "we" where he was present himself. And certainly this self-suppressing simplicity is a rare reason for trusting a man.

book is history in the sense that Thucydides is history, and probably no one would have been audacious enough to say that it was anything less if the Church had not been foolish enough to declare that it is something more. When the Church maintained that it was not history at all in the ordinary sense of the word, but a work proceeding from God, written by the Holy Ghost, the simple basis of truth was left, and the way was prepared for the indignant assaults of disillusionised critics. Orthodoxy was not content to treat the book as historical, but would maintain that it was miraculous; it regarded the epithet "historical" as almost a slur on the supernatural origin of the work. Heterodoxy, not unreasonably, agreed with orthodoxy in considering it not historical, and tried to explain its origin in a naturalistic way. But now it is to be hoped that both wings are coming to one conclusion. The book is history. It has the merits of history; it has also its defects. It is true, as history is true; it is fallible, as history is fallible. We may believe it—nay, we must believe it, as we believe all history—but we are not called upon to believe it, and, indeed, we are only superstitious if we affect to believe it, in any other way. It is, as we shall see very soon, the history of a great revelation, and therefore, as a correct narrative, it is itself a revelation. But the history of a revelation is not of

itself anything more than history. Boswell may give a faultless picture of Johnson without being in any sense assimilated to Johnson, and a man may tell the story of those wonderful years which saw the beginning of the Christian Church without being himself any more than a painstaking and accurate observer.

Now, in order to get the right point of view in understanding this relation of the writer to his work, and to grasp the kind of revelation which we can find in the book, it is desirable, ungracious though the task may seem, to briefly indicate the limitations and the inaccuracies of our author, limitations and inaccuracies not more or less than we find in other historical compositions of antiquity. To begin with, it is very curious to set side by side the three narratives of Saul's conversion (chaps. ix., xxii., xxvi.). They are not irreconcilable, it may be said, but they are certainly very different in their details. A modern writer in so brief a book would either not repeat the same thing three times, or would reduce the three versions to a close conformity. But St. Luke has no concern in the matter. When, in chap. ix., he tells the story in his own words, he does not feel it necessary to make it correspond with the story which later on he will put into the mouth of Paul himself. A general correctness, a summary of the events, and a casting of the central thoughts into

the best form that occurs at the time, are all that he deems desirable. By historical accuracy he does not mean verbal exactitude; he means rather the best interpretation of the events which he is at the moment able to give. This furnishes the clue to understanding the various speeches which he records. He has no intention of giving a verbatim report of what was said. If he gives what appears to be a verbatim report, it is only for the sake of vividness in narrative. The speech of Paul on Areopagus, for example, was not limited to one minute and a half, which is about the time that the reported words would take to deliver; but the historian throws into his own words and gives in a very condensed form the substance of what we can easily see was one of the grandest sermons ever preached. We never charge Thucydides with ill faith because he composes speeches for Pericles, Nicias, or Brasidas; and yet we never understand by those reports in his great work that he commits himself to the verbal accuracy of those speeches. It was the habit of all historians in antiquity—and the habit survived even to the era of Macaulay—to give the spirit and movement of the story which they were relating by expressing in so many words the ideas or emotions which were presumably in the minds of the actors. St. Luke had often heard St. Paul preach; he would be quite

familiar with his style; a few notes jotted down on a special occasion would give him a cue to the discourse, and he would find no difficulty in composing the general line of argument without deviating from the spirit of the speaker, yet without remembering the very words he used. The discourses of other apostles, such as Peter's sermons, or the apology of Stephen, or the speech of Gamaliel, would rest most likely on more uncertain materials. But their substantial accuracy may be accepted just as we accept the substantial accuracy of similar reports in other ancient historians.

When this simple historical view is secured, there is something quite puerile in taking exception to points of detail in these speeches. Supposing Stephen actually stated the period of Egyptian bondage as 400 years, instead of 430, according to Exodus xii. 40, there is no great matter for quibbling;[1] but Stephen may have been pedantically accurate in his dates, and yet the report may not have been quite exact—we are not dealing with a speech in Hansard, but with a speech composed on the recognised principles of ancient historical narrative. A great deal has been made of the anachronism in Acts v. 36, where the historian

[1] St. Paul's historical inaccuracy is more striking in Gal. iii. 17, where he refers the 430 years to the period from the covenant with Abraham to the giving of the Law.

makes Gamaliel refer to the uprising of the *sicarii* under Theudas—an event which did not happen until ten years after the time at which Gamaliel was speaking.[1] It is not possible, therefore, that Gamaliel could have referred to this event as an illustration of abortive insurrections. But it is possible, and quite natural, that our author, in composing the speech of Gamaliel, should put together the two examples which were most familiar to him and to his contemporaries, without knowing or remembering that Theudas was, not before, but a generation later, than Judas of Galilee. If we suppose that Gamaliel's speech is supernaturally recorded by the Holy Ghost, then we charge upon God this historical error; but we must remember that St. Luke never dreams of resting his statements on such infallible authority. If some one more versed in the obscure story of Jewish insurrections had pointed out to him that Theudas was later than the time of Gamaliel's speech, he would have unhesitatingly corrected his mistake, as he did the impression about the Ascension.[2]

[1] Josephus, *Ant.* xx. 5. 1, where the date is fixed by the procuratorship of Crispius Fadus, which was in the reign of Claudius, and not before 44 A.D.

[2] Holtzmann has tried to show that St. Luke had before him the passage in Josephus which records the uprisings of Judas and Theudas, and has argued ingeniously that other parts of St. Luke betray a knowledge of this passage. From this he has argued that the *Acts* must have been written after 93 A.D., the date of the publication of the *Antiquities*. But is it not fair to assume that if St. Luke had read the

But the general fallibilities and inexactnesses which are incident to all historical composition are revealed most unmistakably by a comparison between the story of St. Paul in the *Acts* and the letters of the Apostle which have happily come down to us. It illustrates how even a close and constant companion—a companion who on one occasion at least remained with his friend when all other friends had forsaken him[1]—could fail to learn the minute details of his life or even to exactly express the drift of his teaching. When once the idea of supernatural infallibility in the writing of the history is laid aside there is nothing in this to cause us surprise. It is the commonest thing in the world to find that even a near friend is not fully posted in the dates and transactions of another man's life; and it is the almost universal experience that the disciples of a great teacher more or less misrepresent the position of their master. Sensible people, therefore, will think none the less of the *Acts* because we certainly should not have gathered from that memoir the same view of St. Paul's visits to Jerusalem and relation with the

passage of Josephus, he would not have made the blunder of putting Theudas before Judas, and the anachronism of ascribing the reference to Gamaliel on this occasion? It is curious how all the interested attempts to bring down the date of the Acts to a period when the witness of a contemporary would be nullified are shattered by some irresistible fact, and *mole sua ruunt*.

[1] 2 Tim. iv. 11.

Apostles there which his own letters have taught us to regard as the correct one ; or because the narrative of the Acts betrays no sign of the impassioned polemic which the Apostle of the Gentiles maintained with the Apostles of the Circumcision, makes no reference to the conflict between Peter and Paul, and leaves a general impression that it was Peter who advocated the extension of the Gospel to the Gentiles, and Paul who was tender to Jewish prejudices and rigid in exacting at least the essentials of the Law.

To deny this slight incongruity between Luke's writings and St. Paul's Epistles is an expedient very congenial to those who have a theory to maintain ; but those Bible students who wish to see and to face the facts will shrink from such a method of apologetic as dishonouring to the Bible and disastrous to their own mental honesty. Such students will find a great relief in seeing that they are not called upon to shut their eyes and to deny obvious facts, but that the Acts is a historical work which, notwithstanding the unimpeachable honesty and diligence of its author, cannot possibly give so close a transcript from fact as the letters of the man who was the chief actor in the events.

The question which naturally arises from the recognition of this position—the question whether

everything in the book is to be accepted as actual and trustworthy—may be remitted to the closing part of the present chapter; and indeed it cannot be profitably discussed until we have turned our attention to the general contents of the book. We are prepared, so we may assume, to admit that we have before us a narrative of events which is historical and deserving of a general credence. It has been already hinted that these events themselves were a revelation of God. Not the narrative itself—so runs our formula—but the things narrated constitute the revelation.

It is incumbent upon us now to handle these things narrated, not in detail, which would be a very lengthy process, but in the mass. We must, with the help of our historian, look at the events which he describes; we must grasp the facts as facts; we must see what they imply; we must endeavour to state with as much exactness as possible what is the precise revelation which such facts convey. It will not be possible to compare these events with similar events in the history of other religions, because there are no similar events in other religions. The ideas and truths presented in the events cannot very well be tested by the consideration of other ideas and truths, for they stand essentially alone. But another method of weighing the revelation contained in the book is happily at hand. We shall be able to ask,

and to some extent to determine, how far the revelation contained in the book is still continued in experience, how far the events recorded are repeated in the history of the church. We may find that the verification of the book is nearer at hand than we thought.

When the life of Jesus was ended—when the brief experience of the resurrection days was over—when the mysterious body of the risen Lord had been taken up into heaven, a cloud receiving it out of human sight—the great question was this, Is the work of Jesus done, and must its continuance be sought simply in the careful record of the things which the disciples saw and heard while He was among them? Was the message of Christianity to be the story of "the sinless years that passed beneath the Syrian blue"—the perpetual iteration of what happened *once*, of things which from the nature of the case must recede year by year into the mists of distance, and be seen only through the legendary veil of a tender memory? Was the Gospel to be merely a biography of a life that began in the manger and ended in the Ascension? If this was to be the message of Christianity we may well pause to ask whether it contained in itself the elements of continuance. It may freely be granted—as almost all competent judges have asserted—that what M.

Renan calls "the legend of Jesus" has a charm and a value of its own. No one is now found to deny that His words are vital, His teaching unequalled, and His character impressive and morally stimulating. But could a progressive religion be constructed out of these elements? Mr. Lecky has declared that Christianity has in the character of its Founder preserved a lasting power of Regeneration. But can any character known only through the imperfect medium of historical records be relied on to reach men who are not accustomed to study—men who, when accustomed to study, are more likely to bring their critical powers to bear on the narrative than to be powerfully influenced by the character depicted? Or, to throw ourselves back into the position of those simple men who had just seen their Master disappear from their midst, granted that they had the liveliest memories of His word and work, granted that their emotions were deeply stirred by the circumstances of His death, granted even that they were firmly convinced of His resurrection, what resources had they for making their story an influence of regeneration in the world? They admittedly had no power of a political or social kind; and even if they had been powerful in their own nation, their own nation was insignificant and uninfluential in the world at large; nay, if they had been in the position of Marcus

Aurelius or Julian, what chance had they of convincing the world of their faith any more than those great and earnest emperors were able to make their religious principles a power among their own subjects? These disciples of Jesus were not even men of learning or culture; we can hardly affirm with certainty that any one of them was a man of talent. We have only to turn to the way in which the first of the evangelists quotes the ancient prophecies, and to the many instances of inexact citation and arbitrary interpretation which occur in the New Testament writers generally, to discover the mental limitations and the insufficient literary erudition of these men. Without means, without learning, without social or political influence, without any striking natural gifts, the handful of people who had companied with Jesus were looking into the future and considering how they could be witnesses of the things which they knew.

Now it requires only a careful consideration to discover that they were, on the terms which have been supposed, committed to an impossible task. When modern critics speak in their easy way of the disciples shaping the legend of Jesus, propagating the faith in the strength of their own innocent illusions, and changing the face of society and the course of the world's history by a creed, the chief strength of

which lay in its romantic and imaginary elements, these critics do not appear to notice that they are ascribing to the first disciples the accomplishment of an impossible task. Let us propose only one simple question to them. Can they show any single life within the range of their experience transformed, changed from bad to good, by the mere statement of a fiction? To speak of changing the world in a moral and spiritual sense by the zealous proclamation of an untruth is simply to attribute an effect to that which is not a *vera causa*.

But if the disciples and their followers actually effected the results which are now historically indisputable, it is necessary for every careful student to seek for the power or the instruments which made the impossible task possible. The book which we are now considering is the statement from one who was a contemporary, and in some cases an eye-witness, of the influence that was at work, of the unexplained elements which changed the simple narrative of the life of Jesus into the story of the Church.

We saw in the last chapter how the promise of His continued presence even after His death in the midst of His disciples was a large feature in the teaching of Jesus. He was to return to them when He had left them. The manner of His return was not very explicitly described; but there was a "promise of the

Father;" and as at the beginning of their discipleship they had been baptized with water, they were now shortly to be baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire (Acts i. 5). About six weeks after the Crucifixion, on the day of Pentecost, this promise was realised; they received *power*, and were able to be the witnesses of Jesus, first to Jerusalem and the home provinces, and afterwards to the uttermost parts of the earth. The description of this event, which was the turning-point in the history of Christianity, is given in very picturesque language, as it was currently described and received among believers in the writer's own day, fifty or sixty years after it happened. We must remember that we are dealing with a spiritual fact; the rushing wind and the tongues of fire are symbols of a spiritual experience which is even now not readily rendered into the bare language of prose, and at its first occurrence transcended all ordinary modes of linguistic representation. We are in some ways better able than St. Luke to describe what happened, for the issue of a great event is often the best interpretation of its beginning. The disciples, waiting together, prayerful and expectant, were one and all possessed by a new spiritual influence; an inward illumination revealed to them with convincing clearness the things of Christ; they saw His life, His death, His resurrection in a new light; they apprehended

that He was exalted to give repentance and remission of sins, and that through faith in His name whoever believed should be immediately saved. Not only did the facts present themselves in this distinct and salvatory way, but with the new realisation had come a new and conscious power of expression; they found themselves able to *speak* the things which hitherto they had not been able even to conceive; they were possessed with the conviction that a message was given to them which could and must be delivered to every nation under heaven. There was an end of faltering and weakness—here was the great power of God. Not in their own strength, any more than in their own wisdom, they might step out to proclaim Jesus. He was indeed back with them again, not visible, not audible, but manifest inwardly, His character unchanged, His powers enlarged because the fleshly limitations were removed, His saving work made applicable to all who would believe and receive Him. This was the baptism of the Holy Ghost—an experience which not unnaturally is described by those who have passed through it otherwise than by those who simply see the outward effects. That little company of unlettered men immediately began to speak with "tongues of fire." Their words were human words, words not in themselves very extraordinary, but

they came with a startling power. Men who heard were pricked to the heart; with strange and unexpected emotion they asked, "What must we do to be saved?" with eager faith they accepted Jesus, and in accepting Him were baptized with the same spiritual Power. Changed inwardly, new creatures in Christ, they gathered together in societies, and manifested in their work and worship, in their lives and in their speech, the same transforming spiritual energy which had transformed them. It all seemed, in looking back upon it, miraculous; indeed, it all was miraculous. It was entirely a new experience in the history of the world and the development of religion. This power of a mere message, a *κήρυγμα*, as it was called by the Greeks, to break the hard heart, touch the seared conscience, open the spiritually darkened eyes, and change the whole inner nature, was so unexampled that all who saw it felt that they were living in a region of miracle; every spiritual fact seemed to be confirmed by signs following. The Risen Lord was certainly with His own, as He had promised to be, doing greater things than He had done in the flesh because He had gone to the Father. It is not difficult to conceive how the doings of those first glad days were treasured up in the memories of those who had seen them. With what awe they would speak of the

mysterious influence which was at work not only on men's minds, but on their bodies! With what wonder would they repeat in after days how the common religious experience led to a common life, and a communism of property; how two disciples had with a word of mighty faith healed a lame man in the Temple; how persecution broke out; how two members of the community who had deceived the apostles mysteriously expired; how that guileless and enthusiastic Stephen died—the first martyr; how news began to come in to Jerusalem from those who were scattered abroad by the persecution! Philip's strange experiences at Samaria and at Azotus; Saul's sudden change from a persecutor to a believer; Peter's work at Joppa, and admission of a Gentile—yes, actually a Roman—into the community of the Holy Ghost, would pass from lip to lip. And with gratitude it would be told how Peter was in a sweet and impressive way delivered from prison; and then how the new convert, Saul, was becoming a mightier preacher of the faith than any of the first apostles, carrying the blessed name far out among the Gentiles. In the Acts of the Apostles we have the faithful record of all these facts as they were conceived by the churches of the following generation. It is the story of the first operations of the Spiritual Christ in the world, the story of the Holy Ghost.

Now men who to the present day do "not so much as know that there is a Holy Ghost" pass lightly over the whole book and relegate it to the region of fable, because it is a record of the miraculous. But it is for this very reason that we assign it a place in history. The essential features of the story have been repeated, and are constantly to-day being repeated, in the history of the Church; and if this book is not history we are indeed without a clue to the marvels which pass before our eyes. We may freely admit that those who deny the veracity of these present realities are logically bound *a fortiori* to reject the *Acts of the Apostles;* but the same kind of logic demands that we who know the reality of the spiritual things which happen to-day should believe in the veracity of the *Acts.* We may freely admit that where our experience to-day does not confirm events recorded in that early book we are bound to hold the truth of those events with a loosened conviction, and to candidly allow at least a possibility that some mistake has crept into the tradition. But the essential features of this story are ever vivid and fresh in the experience of the Church: such things are enacted before our own eyes. The baptism of the Spirit is no miracle of a bygone age, it is a miracle of to-day. To-day assembled disciples, and often disciples in solitude and isolation, receive the mighty impact of

the Spirit. To-day they speak simple words which break like a mighty rushing wind over assemblies of men, and shake the stubborn will, the hardened heart, the deadened conscience, of the godless. To-day more things are wrought by prayer than the world cares to understand. To-day every mission field has its own story to tell of events which are in every essential respect identical with those which are recorded in the *Acts of the Apostles*. When, in the little river near Ongole, Dr. Clough and his assistant, working from morning to night, baptized between two and three thousand converts in a day, the story of Pentecost was practically repeated. When the ignorant Karen tribes hailed the arrival of the missionaries because tradition told them of a Heavenly Father, the knowledge of whom they had lost through their sins, some of Paul's experiences amongst the more susceptible heathen in Galatia, or the more candid Jews in Berœa, were repeated. Nay, strange as it may sound, the story of the persecution in Madagascar, and the miraculous propagation of the faith when the missionaries were expelled from the Island, and all believers were being ruthlessly martyred, is far more wonderful than any story told in our book. Fiji and the South Seas, Hawaii and New Guinea, have added, if we may use the expression which has lately become common, chapters to the Acts of the

Apostles surpassing in interest any of the earlier chapters included in the Canon. It is always a vain thing to recite the miraculous events in the history of the Church to the unspiritual world, which does not mean to believe; the miracles are not for the purpose of convincing unbelievers, they are the outcome of a faith in God which has already been otherwise established; but it is only stating a simple fact to say that authentic and unquestioned missionary literature —and it must be remembered that the missionary work is the parallel in the modern world to the history of the *Acts*—teems with events which are miraculous in the only sense in which any of us wish to maintain the reality of miracles—that is, events which admit of no other explanation than that God acts immediately and unmistakably in and for His people when they are engaged in carrying on the work which He gives them to do.

But here it may be said, and with much force, no present-day experience gives us any example of a man being 'spirited away from one place to another as Philip was, or of dead people being brought to life as Lydia and Eutychus were, or of the sick being healed by contact with cloths and garments, as is described in the *Acts*. We grant, some thoughtful and impartial observers will say, that the cure of disease through strong religious faith is not uncommon, that

a direct guidance of the Spirit such as Paul received again and again in his work is frequently met with in the biographies of devoted men like Stephen Grellet or John Wesley, and that the overruling of physical events, winds and storms and the like, in the interest of God's servants, is as manifest in such a book as John Paton's life as it is in the *Acts of the Apostles;* but these other miracles, of which we have no kind of experience, are not credible. The dead are not raised; and such magical prodigies as the healing of the sick by touching relics, or the transportation of a body through the air, are dishonouring to the general tone, the high and spiritual tone, of the narrative. Now the whole of this chapter has been quite in vain if it has not established the position that the book with which we are dealing is a history—that is, a narrative which is certainly true on the whole, but is not guaranteed to be infallibly correct in detail. A wise man, then, will feel no difficulty in accepting its record in the main, while reserving his judgment about special points. That is the way in which we are bound to deal with all historical documents. And it has been already granted that the kind and degree of belief with which we accept facts such as have never come within the range of our experience must always be very different from the certitude with which we accept things which are verified by proofs before our

eyes. It is therefore quite open to any of us in reading the book to take out the stories to which we are now referring, to set them aside, and to say, "Upon the truth of these points I suspend judgment;" and it is quite conceivable that the faith of many men will be the stronger for not being encumbered with demands which strain the reason, if they may accept and hold fast the great spiritual verities without turning aside to consider material miracles which are a distraction rather than a revelation; the great story of the Church's initiation, of the new power introduced into religious life for the purpose of proclaiming the Risen Lord and winning a reluctant world to Him, may stand out clear and convincing apart from all these questionable details. We are bound, indeed, to make it clear that the acceptance of Jesus as our Saviour, and the reception of pardon and peace through Him, do not in the least depend upon the reality of these miracles recorded in our book. If Lydia and Eutychus had never existed—or having died were not raised—it does not in the least alter the fact that Jesus lives, and is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. And it is almost childish to imply that we cannot be born again by the Spirit unless we believe that Philip was transported through the air after he had baptized the Eunuch, and that the touch

of St. Paul's garments was a curative influence on the sick. In this matter where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty, and a sincere believer will shrink very much from casting a mental stumbling-block in the way of his brother.

But at the same time the present writer may avow his own conviction. To his mind it seems perfectly evident that the historical veracity of our book is so established, that it puts a great obstacle in the way of denying what may be called so flagrant a fact as a raising from the dead. The whole story is too much in the atmosphere and spirit of the time to permit us to understand how a legend of such a nature could have grown up. And, on the other hand, the actual raising up of a dead person to life was a manifestation of Divine Power which had a peculiar significance in a Gospel which had for its object to declare that all the dead should one day rise to judgment. Taking these larger considerations into account, one might say, these narratives are not what one may call proved, but they are probable. On the other hand, the transport of Philip through the air and the magical healing of the sick by handkerchiefs which had touched the Apostle[1] are not at all in the same category: should they be questioned or even rejected, that would afford no safe reason for discrediting facts

[1] Acts xix. 12.

which are supported by considerations of the kind just alluded to.

To sum up in one word, the story of the Acts is the narrative of a mighty revelation, the revelation of the Holy Ghost, which has this peculiar property, that it was only the beginning of a revelation which was continued, and is present with us in undiminished vividness and power to-day.

There may be some to whom the traditional view of revelation is so necessary that, if the view is shaken, revelation is lost. Such persons would say naïvely enough that if diseases were not healed by the means of the handkerchiefs and aprons, then they have no ground for believing in Pentecost or the reality of the Holy Ghost. But there must be many in our day to whom a disentanglement of ideas will come as a relief, and they will welcome the possibility of receiving the great spiritual realities on the ground of history and experience, and yet holding with a loose hand things which in the light of history and experience seem deficiently supported by evidence.

CHAPTER XI.

THE PAULINE LETTERS.

"I forbear, lest any man should account of me above that which he seeth me to be, or heareth from me."—2 Cor. xii. 6.

"The exceeding greatness of the revelations."—2 Cor. v. 7.

It might seem almost impossible to exaggerate the inspiration of St. Paul's writings, or the significance of the revelation which has been given to the world through him. Surely there could be no fear that any one, by making such an exaggeration, would end in discrediting the work and the writings of this Apostle. Yet this almost impossible result the dogmatism which has prevailed in the Reformed Churches has very nearly achieved. From the obvious position that revelations of exceeding greatness were made to St. Paul, the dogma passed to the conclusion that every word he uttered, or at any rate every line he wrote or dictated, must be a revelation; it demanded as an article of faith that every opinion he expressed, every doctrine he formulated, every regulation he made, must be accepted as

the utterance of the mind, and even of the mouth, of God. It was just the same kind of inference which we have observed repeatedly in our investigation: "Here certainly is a distinct revelation, *therefore* everything here is revelation." The fear of the Apostle has been amply justified. Inconsiderate men have "accounted of him above that which they heard from" him, with the result that they have brought his authority into question; insisting on a quality of infallibility in all that he wrote, as the fallibility of a part has been established, they have led many to conclude that none is infallible. The indiscriminate judgment has not only been misguided, it has been misleading, for it has involved in an equal suspicion all the things which it refused to distinguish. Where dogma insists that the whole is Divine, and will admit of no separation or appraisal, scepticism is sure one day to accept the premiss that the whole is indivisible, and must stand or fall together, but to draw the conclusion that, as parts are evidently human, there is in the whole nothing that is Divine.

The traditional dogmatism has contrived also to crystallise another element of obscurity. Not unnaturally the great name of Paul gave rise to many pseudepigraphical writings—that is to say, teachers of a later date, wishing to give colour to their teaching,

couched it in the form of a Pauline letter. Employing in some cases no doubt fragments of the Apostle's thought or language, they elaborated their material and produced a composition which might easily be mistaken for his. Whether we have in our Canon any writings of this order is a matter of question. But the old orthodoxy foreclosed the question, and was eager to treat it as a matter of faith or of unfaith; it demanded that as a preliminary of reading the New Testament every reader should concede that every Pauline letter was written by St. Paul. Thus not only was it necessary to believe that every word of Paul's was a word of God, but it was also required that every word attributed to Paul when the Canon of the New Testament was made should be treated unquestioningly as his. No more unfortunate claim could be imagined; for while some of the letters are admitted by every authority to be genuine products of the Apostle's pen, others present most serious difficulties. The solid dogma which would give precisely the same degree of authenticity to the Romans and to the First Epistle to Timothy succeeds only in casting over the former the shadow of suspicion which undoubtedly rests on the latter. And again, when dogma has decided that these letters must all be Paul's, or else be treated as spurious and unworthy of attention, it virtually deprives us

of these most valuable writings directly a historical or critical inquiry has led us to question whether they could really have come from the pen of the Apostle.

It is evident, then, that in trying to estimate the revelation in the Pauline letters we must attempt to distinguish; we must avoid the lethargic methods of dogmatism, and cease to study these writings with half-closed eyes. In the first place, we want to determine as accurately as possible what was the revelation conveyed to mankind by the Apostle Paul; in the second place, we want to discriminate, in order to see where the revelation in his writings blends with that which is not revelation; and lastly, we have to consider what kind of revelation is, or may be, contained in letters which bear the Apostle's name, but cannot be with complete certainty attributed to him as their immediate author.

It is difficult to confine this threefold inquiry within the prescribed limits; but it will help us to be concise if we begin by grouping the thirteen Pauline letters in the following way: *First*, the two to the Thessalonians which were written during the second missionary tour, in 52 or 53 A.D. *Second*, Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, and Romans, which were the product of that prolonged stay in Ephesus, or the following year, let us say 57 or 58 A.D. *Third*,

Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon, which may be plausibly attributed to the period of imprisonment at Cæsarea (Acts xxv. 27), let us say between 59 and 61 A.D. *Fourthly*, Philippians, which was written during the imprisonment in Rome, between 62 and 64 A.D. (Acts xxviii. 30). *Lastly*, the three Pastoral Epistles, which present this, among many other difficulties, that it is impossible to determine at what period in the Apostle's life, as it is known to us, they could have been written; they must therefore either be accepted as an authority for events and conditions of which otherwise we have no information, or be relegated to the class of literature which has been mentioned above as pseudepigraphical.

It will thus be observed that the letters which have come down to us as St. Paul's belong to the twelve closing years of his life. The earliest of them must have been written eighteen or nineteen years after his conversion; the latest of them may be regarded as the outcome of some four years of more or less solitary confinement. Any difference which may appear in the tone or the method, the subject or the doctrine of the Epistles, may be sufficiently explained by referring to these facts.

We may now approach the first part of our threefold inquiry—the first, and from the standpoint of the present book by far the most important—What, in

broad outline, was the revelation conveyed to the Church by the Apostle Paul?

To begin with, the faith of Jesus was destined to last long after those who had seen the Lord should have passed away. It might seem, therefore, to be an open question whether the effect which had been produced in the hearts and lives of the disciples by their experience of Jesus could be produced in those who had not seen, and now never could in ordinary human life see Him. Was the apostleship to be a unique office strictly and finally limited, or was the Lord who had risen from the dead to be at large in the world, able to approach and to master, to claim, to ordain, and to commission, men who, except in the Spirit, could not know Him? It was indeed a vital question. If the Saviour was to be merely a personal memory or a tradition, if He was to be merely the subject of a few biographical sketches, a lovely but shadowy frontispiece to a book which must after all be only human, there certainly would be no element of permanence in the new faith. As our experience in these recent days has shown, the records of the evangelists, notwithstanding their simplicity and directness and candour, would not be enough in themselves to establish the existence of so remarkable a Being as Christ. Was the Risen Lord, then, one who could be revealed in human

hearts by the direct action of the Spirit? Could His presence be received to change the character, to master the will, to fill with Divine power one who believed? Could His life be manifested in human beings who had not known Him after the flesh? Could a direct witness be given that He was a Saviour by a saving work carried on inwardly, by a new creation issuing in a renewed and a sanctified human life? These questions, or rather this question, for they are all one, received a striking and impressive answer in the person of Paul. His letters are in the first place autobiographical. With a curious ruggedness of diction, with a palpitating reality of self-confession, he shows us the inner being of one who had never seen Jesus in the flesh, but was entirely possessed by Him, one who seldom dwelt upon those brief years of earthly life, with their wonders and their teachings, but was overwhelmingly occupied with the life of Christ produced and worked out in himself—it was no longer he that lived, but Christ that lived in him. What Paul was may be very clearly gathered from an attentive perusal of his letters, and no one can question that the portrait so unconsciously drawn by the painter of himself is one of the most remarkable figures in history: it is that of a man on fire with the love of God and the love of men; it is that of a man who

seems to be an irrepressible fountain of self-sacrificing activity; it is that of a man who is intensely human and yet essentially superhuman. In a word, Paul is a man in whom the dominating principle is Jesus Christ. It is no exaggeration for him to say that for him to live is Christ. He has not only entered into the life and death of Jesus, so as to be crucified, buried, and risen again with Him, and so as to be constantly filling up the measure of His sufferings, and bearing about in his body His marks; but the life of Jesus has entered into him. There is nothing at all like it in the world's history before. In a certain sense Socrates entered into Plato, and lived again idealised in the works of his great scholar. But to Plato, Socrates was at most a master and an example. To Paul, Christ is not a master or an example, except in a secondary sense; He is an indwelling person, a power that brings every thought into subjection, strengthens every weakness, and subdues every sin. Wilful, weak, and sinful as he was by nature, Paul can yet say with perfect truth that his will is entirely constrained by Christ, he can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth him, and sin has ceased to have dominion over him.

The first, and in many ways the most important, significance of Paul's letters is that they are the

authentic picture of this Christ-filled personality, this personality in which Christ, no longer present in the flesh, is yet manifestly revealed. And the significance is largely derived from the fact that what Paul was any one of us may become. We cannot be what John was or what Peter was, for they saw the Lord in the flesh, and we did not. Had we been shut up to their testimony we might always have imagined that their peculiar privilege was the indispensable condition of their experience. But if it pleased God to reveal His Son in Paul, it may please Him to make a similar revelation in us. If Paul became possessed with that Divine Being, and received that witness of the Spirit by which he was assured of sonship with the Father, we may have a similar experience, for we are exactly in his position. Our advantages are the same—for he expressly disclaims as an advantage anything which he derived from intercourse with the apostles, "they added nothing to him"—our disadvantages he had to face, and even more than ours, for he had to approach the acceptance of Christ with all those deep-rooted prejudices which were ingrained in the Judaism, and especially the Pharisaism, of that day.

We may say, then, to begin with, that the revelation in the Pauline letters is that of the Christ living in a human heart, living and working, working and

producing Divine results, though the person in question knew Him not by sight, but only, as he would say, *by faith.*

But from this characteristic immediately follows another. When the experience of a personal indwelling Christ began in him, Paul did not confer with other believers, but went, we are told, into solitude, and spent a period of time which we may compute to be something like ten years in conceiving and shaping what he calls his "gospel." During long solitary hours of meditation and prayer he brought out into distinct consciousness all that was implied in the Christ that was revealed in him. Again and again he refers to what he had received from the Lord. Starting from the experience which had transformed his own life, he developed genetically the meaning and the method, the results and the effects, of his Saviour's earthly life, death, resurrection, and risen life. From this mental activity working in the plastic material of his own rich spiritual growth was produced what might be called a tentative theology, a doctrine of redemption, a theory of sin, a view of history, and even a prophetic eschatology ; tentative, we are bound to admit, because we are able to trace certain developments and variations in the Epistles which have come down to us belonging to those twelve fruitful years ; not final or complete, for nothing which St. Paul says

gives an idea that theology was to close with him, or that the same Spirit that worked mightily in him, revealing the things of Christ, would cease to work in the Church and in other Christian men after he had gone; but while tentative, progressive, and incomplete, the interpretation of the Christian facts which this inspired thinker gave remains to this day, if we except the Johannine writings, the best we have. Partly, it may be, because subsequent thinkers have been overshadowed by his authority, and have hesitated to step beyond his modes of thought, but chiefly, we may suppose, because the great truths with which he dealt are not susceptible of a fuller definition than that which came to the first illuminated and consecrated mind;—in any case it is true to say that, if we wish to travel outside the bare fact of our redemption, if we wish to form some idea of the relation between Christ and God, or of the nature of the Holy Spirit, if we wish to examine into the mode by which the work of Christ secures our pardon and salvation, if we wish to know what is to be the course of human affairs or the manner of the End, we have no writer to consult half so complete, so suggestive, so fruitful, as this wonderful man whose brief occasional letters have been treasured up and handed down through these many centuries. It is from Paul we have learnt what we know of the nature of sin; from him we

have discovered the futility of the Law and the Sacrifices; from him we have been able to gather at least in vague outline the transcendent fact of that atonement which takes the place of the ancient sacrificial system. It is Paul who, looking back upon the Cross, perceived the meaning of it, which they who actually saw it never more than surmised. He saw in it the reconciliation between God and man; he saw in it the marvellous means by which God could Himself take away the sin of the world, could be just and at the same time justify sinners, not imputing their iniquities to them. He saw, too, in that undreamed-of way by which God would save mankind, the death of the Law, the removal of the barrier between Jew and Gentile, the drawing together of all men into one great redeemed family—nay, even the restoration of the whole creation to that harmony, peace, and joy which poets had fabled in a Golden Age. And it was his peculiar discovery—a discovery which he had made in his own experience—that the marvellous and transforming benefits of this redemption were not, could not be, earned, but are the free gift of God to every one that will take them by faith.

It would appear, then, that a second sense in which the Epistles of Paul contain a revelation, is that they give us the nearest approach we have yet made to a systematic explanation of the facts of redemption.

Now when we speak of the manifestation of Christ in the person of Paul, or of that sublime presentation of Christ as the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation, which is given in no doubtful outline throughout the Apostle's writings, we are evidently touching on Revelation in the most accurate sense of the word, and we may dwell without exaggeration on "the exceeding greatness of the revelations" which are thus conveyed to us. But there is a great deal in St. Paul's writings which, without being *revelation* in this strict meaning of the term, is yet of inestimable value. So great has the value appeared to the successive ages of the Church that the temptation has always been present to give the stamp of revelation to these utterances which are commingled with much that rightly claims that name. A few examples may make this distinction plain. The Epistles of St. Paul are our chief authority for the constitution, the methods, the conduct of the early societies, or Churches, which resulted from the preaching of the gospel. From them we learn how "the saints and faithful brethren in Christ" were gathered together into communities with the object of ministering to one another in spiritual, and even in temporal, things; how the various gifts of the Spirit were bestowed upon the members of these communities for mutual edification; how the assemblies for worship, and

other ministrations of the society, were regulated; how these beautiful brotherhoods were marred by quarrels and divisions, by gross immoralities, by intolerance and exclusiveness, by erroneous doctrines about this life and the life to come. Such a picture of the Primitive Church, as it existed in the decade 52–64 A.D., is of absorbing interest and of incalculable value. But it is not revelation. It is a transcript from the facts which were before the Apostle's eyes, and the facts themselves were not in their totality a revelation. For while the various operations of the Spirit, the prophecies and tongues, the exhortations, the miracles, and the governments, were undoubtedly a striking revelation of the new mysterious power which was at work since Pentecost, the abuses and extravagances which it was the object of the Apostle to correct were far from being a revelation; they were simply the outcome of human frailty, or, as Paul himself would perhaps say, of diabolical delusion.

Or again, the Epistles of Paul contain a body of ethical precepts which for purity, beauty, and completeness have never been surpassed. The law of the Sermon on the Mount is translated into the practice of the new Christian communities. Now, so far as this new Ethic is connected with the new principle of redemption, and is shown to be the necessary outcome

of the indwelling Christ, we may say that we have here a great and incalculable revelation. The truth that the good life was not to be made the condition of acceptance with God, but that the position of forgiveness and reconciliation through the sacrifice of Christ was to be the starting-point of the good life, was part and parcel of the doctrine which we have already considered as a revelation delivered through St. Paul. But the individual precepts of right conduct—regulations, for example, about meat offered to idols, or about women praying with their heads covered—are to be regarded as inferences which the Apostle draws from his own understanding of Christ. Their value lies rather in their demonstrable truth, commending itself to the conscience in the sight of God, than in their *à priori* authority. We certainly misunderstand the Apostle, and raise an entirely false issue, when we give to this moral teaching with which his writings abound that note of finality and that suggestion of infallibility which would preclude the free operation of the Spirit in revealing other things to us, as the ages roll by (cf. Phil. iii. 13–16). The revelation implied in the root principle of the Pauline Ethic must not lead us to assume that every application which the teacher makes of his principle is an infallible oracle of God.

Or once more, in no respect has the group of

Pauline letters been of more interest to the Church than in those glimpses of the Apostle's human personality maintained in conjunction with the indwelling Christ. The infirmities of Paul, his limitations—his passionate utterance, his deep feeling, his vehement denunciations—all those characteristics which lead him to exclaim from time to time, "I speak as a man," or "I speak in foolishness," or "I speak as one beside himself," are intensely interesting and attractive, but they are not in any sense revelation, as we have defined the term. They show us the man, they endear the man to us, they give us a fellow-feeling with him, they are among the hooks by which he grapples us to him while he communicates his message ; but we give to language a strange and misleading sense when we speak of all these peculiarly human utterances of a strong individuality as "the word of God."

But in thus indicating some of the valuable elements in St. Paul's writings which are yet not to be described as revelation, we have insensibly passed over into the second part of our inquiry—how to discriminate where the Epistles are human, and where they are Divine. Sometimes St. Paul says very candidly that he speaks "not of commandment" (1 Cor. vii. 6, 12, 25, 40 ; 2 Cor. viii. 8), and once even he says, "I speak not after the Lord, but as in

foolishness" (2 Cor. xi. 17). It may be said, of course, that such disclaimers in special instances only emphasise the truth that elsewhere he does speak "by commandment" and "after the Lord." And every consideration must be given to this argument. But there are evidently many passages in the Epistles where he is not, to use a technical expression, speaking *ex cathedrâ*. To suppose that there is any Divine revelation in the command to bring the cloke, and the books, and especially the parchments which he had left at Troas, is a *reductio ad absurdum* of the unreflecting view which dogmatism has taken. Or the fatherly counsel to Timothy to take a little wine for his stomach's sake: it is a kind of travesty of inspiration to maintain that St. Paul was the mouthpiece of God in giving such advice, and one can imagine the vehement indignation with which he would learn that his words had been often cited as a Divine authority for maintaining the destructive drinking practices of modern society. In the case of his celibate precepts he frankly confesses that he is following his own judgment, so much so that when he does speak, as it were *ex cathedrâ*, on the subject of marriage, in the Ephesians, he gives, in direct contradiction of his own practice, the most exalted and sanctifying view of that Divine ordinance to be found in all literature. But when he mentions his own practice

of forbidding women to speak in the church it is certainly very gratuitous to invest his words with a perpetual Divine power for silencing the inspired utterances of gifted women. It is true that many good women who believe in the Divine absoluteness of every word of Scripture, following the guidance of the Spirit, freely violate these restrictions (1 Cor. xiv. 34; 1 Tim. ii. 11, 12); but there are others, more logical or less inspired, who, bound by this accidental opinion of St. Paul's, have remained silent where their speech might have been the power of God to the salvation of men.

It certainly is our own fault if we misread and wrest St. Paul. Never was any man more human, more candid, more unpretentious; he makes no affectation of speaking as an oracle whenever he opens his mouth; and he trusted to the common sense of his readers, instructed by the Spirit, to distinguish between the things, which he delivered by revelation with the demonstration of the Spirit and of power, and the mere *obiter dicta* of a free and open correspondence. He did not expect any one to think him inspired when he commanded his followers to greet one another with a holy kiss, or to attach mysterious meanings to the affectionate and thoughtful salutations with which he closes his Epistles. If many good people in the present day are unable to draw this

distinction, or to see any difference between human speech and Divine revelation, this obtuseness must be charged to the numbing effect of the mechanical theory of inspiration which has so long oppressed the Church.

When we turn from the mere human elements in St. Paul's writings to his actual mistakes we enter upon a very difficult and uncongenial task; but it is very important to realise that even St. Paul, notwithstanding his extraordinary experience, his striking gifts, and his undoubted inspiration, was by no means clothed in the mantle of infallibility which would be assumed, so he declared, by the man of sin and not by the servant of God.

No one, for example, can study carefully the use which he makes of the Old Testament without observing the inexactness of his quotations and the interpretation, often quite unjustified by the original context, which he puts upon the venerable words. To cite him as an exegete of the ancient Scriptures would be obviously absurd. His method of using them is essentially rabbinical—that is, he regards the writings through the medium of an interpretation; he will quote from the Septuagint, for example, if that inaccurate Greek version serves his purpose better than the Hebrew original; or he will cite a mere tradition, as when he refers to the names of the magicians who

withstood Moses, Joannes, and Jambres. Or he will employ a Targum, as it were, on a text, and thereby read into it a totally irrelevant meaning; as, for example, when he quotes the beautiful humane law of Deuteronomy (xxv. 4), which showed God's care for oxen, and in the eagerness of his application implies that the injunction did not refer to the oxen at all, which would be beneath the notice of God, but was a metaphorical way of sanctioning the principle that the preacher of the gospel should live by the gospel (1 Cor. ix. 9).[1]

But the most striking of the mistakes into which the Apostle, owing to the necessary limitations of the most inspired teachers, fell, was the conviction that the Parousia, or second coming of the Lord, was to be in that generation. In his first letter which has come down to us, referring to that great event, he implies that he himself would be living when it happened (1 Thess. iv. 15–17, "*we* which are alive"), and though in his second letter to Thessalonica he sought to remove the erroneous impression that the

[1] It is a curious fact that the one section of Christians which is most emphatic in maintaining the Divine infallibility of "every scripture," to use their own term, yet rejects this inference of St. Paul's in favour of a paid ministry. But this is only another illustration of the way in which a hard dogmatic theory of inspiration is constantly combined with the most glaring violation of Scripture teaching. In practice, those who hold most firmly to the Bible being the Word of God, whole and unbroken, are as far as any one from acting upon their untenable theory.

day of which he had spoken was actually upon them,[1] yet at the end of his life he still dwelt fondly on the belief that "the Lord was near" (Phil. iv. 6), and he left an impression behind him that though he himself had gone, that generation would not pass away without seeing the great Return. It is this limitation —let us say this veil drawn over the very face of revelation—this inability of one who saw so much to see this also—that will deter all thoughtful readers from dwelling unduly on St. Paul's forecast of what is to happen at the end of the world. It may prove some day that all he says on the subject was indeed a literal apocalyptic prophecy; but only the event can show. The one distinct test by which we can judge the Apostle's prevision tends to show that it was not for him, any more than for the Twelve, to know the times and the seasons; and if we read aright all that he has written we shall probably feel that nothing was farther from his intention than to encourage those idle prognostications of the future which from his day to ours have done nothing but cover the framers of them with confusion, and the truth which they are supposed to confirm with discredit. It is open to any of us to notice that Paul anticipated a certain course of events: a time of defection, the manifestation of an antichrist, the in-

[1] ὅτι ἐνέστηκεν ἡ ἡμέρα τοῦ Κυρίου (2 Thess. ii. 2).

gathering of Israel, the appearance of the Lord in the heavens, and the catching up of the saints into the air. But those who have learnt the true genius of Scripture, and the real meaning of prophecy, will be most careful to distinguish between these dips into the future and the assured Revelation of God, and they will remember the salutary principle which is laid down in the Old Testament, that the only test of a real prophecy is whether it comes to pass or not. For prophecy is not given for private interpretations, or to satisfy the curiosity of dreamers, but in order that when the events have happened students of Scripture may see how they were foretold, and thus gather the way in which the increasing purpose of God runs and works through all the development of history.

There still remains the third branch of our inquiry. Every student is aware that the authenticity of the Pauline Epistles has not been allowed to pass without question. In the above considerations we have assumed that all the letters are from the pen or from the tongue of the Apostle. And with regard to ten of them the assumption is tolerably safe if we remember that the four Epistles which formed our second group are the most certainly his, while the first group, the third, and the fourth afford at any rate ground for inquiry. But the last of our groups,

the three Pastoral Epistles, as they are called, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, cannot be passed by with this quiet assumption. "The differences between the Pastoral Epistles," to quote the verdict of the late Dr. Hatch,[1] "and the other Epistles in respect of the character of their contents, their philological peculiarities, the difficulty of reconciling the historical references with what is known from other sources of the life of St. Paul, the difficulty of finding any known form of belief which precisely answers to the opinions which they attack, and the further difficulty of believing that so elaborate a debasement of Christianity had grown up in the brief interval between St. Paul's first contact with Hellenism and his death," have led the majority of modern critics to question or deny their authenticity. It is not necessary here to cite names, for great authorities are often as biassed in their judgments as the simplest country clergyman; but no one can weigh the arguments advanced by Holtzmann without reaching the conclusion that there are at any rate grave difficulties in the way of believing that these three letters come from the hand of St. Paul. Now assuming that these difficulties are decisive, and on the supposition that we have here an example of a kind of religious writing common in antiquity, but unknown among us, are we to dismiss the idea of

[1] *Encycl. Brit.* (ed. ix.), vol. xviii. 351.

revelation in connection with these compositions, or, if we may retain it, what complexion will it wear?

Let us face this possibility. Some years after the death of Paul, a follower of his—it may have been Timotheus or Titus, who knows?—found himself confronted by difficulties of doctrine and Church organisation which he did not know how to meet. He had by him, we will suppose, some fragments of letters which the great Apostle had written to his two lieutenants during a temporary absence from them, when the one was at Ephesus and the other was in Crete. He publishes these fragments with additions, incorporating precepts pertinent to the present crisis, and laying down regulations which quite possibly had been committed to Timothy or to Titus during the Apostle's lifetime. The result is, not of course a composition of St. Paul in the literal sense of the word, but yet, very intelligibly, a Pauline letter.

Supposing this conjecture of the origin of these letters be accepted, what difference does it make to our idea of the revelation contained in them? It must be owned, very little. So far as the teaching is marked by what may be called the note of Paul, it carries its own authentication with it. The truths are not less true because they are incorporated in a composition which had the origin we have supposed.

On the other hand, where the teaching of these Epistles deviates from the tone and spirit of the Apostle, as, for instance, in the insistence on "a form of sound words," and "a faith" which is in effect a creed, or in the new conception of the Church as an organised society which contains the good and bad alike, vessels unto honour and vessels unto dishonour (1 Tim. ii. 20), or in the explicit regulations for the appointment of elders and deacons, we may be constrained to admit that this is no longer Paulinism; but we are by no means forced to the conclusion that it is not revelation. The development of the faith and of the Church in this direction may have been carried out by the operation of the Spirit and transmitted through the medium of these brief letters, though the pen of St. Paul was never used, and his name was only employed because of his personal connection with Timothy and Titus. Indeed, it is curious to observe the perversity and confusion of thought that would decline to accept even the revelation of God unless it should be conveyed in literary channels which conform to modern standards and modern usage.

And now in passing on from the subject of the revelation contained in the Pauline letters, we may allow ourselves a closing observation. The revelation of Paul is above all things one that must be taken in

its entirety. Until his whole position, his whole experience, his whole personality, his whole teaching, is understood, nothing can be made of him. To quote an isolated fragment of his writings is almost certainly to misquote him. His words are not like the words of Jesus—deep wells of truth by which you may sit down and draw out new and wonderful meanings continually—but they are links in a continuous chain. Almost every heresy which has divided the Church may be traced to the misguided habit of seizing on some text out of St. Paul and treating it, regardless of its connection, as an axiom from which a system of theology may be deduced. The great Churchman Augustine was the greatest of offenders in this abuse of St. Paul's writings, though a notice in 2 Pet. iii. 16 shows how the evil began almost from the first. Men who have, like Luther, seized some central and essential thought of the great Apostle's, have been the most salutary and powerful influences in the history of Christendom; but they who have, like Calvin, seized on some incidental thought, and without any criterion for determining the delimitation of the human and the Divine, have constructed a system of theology on a side issue of the great Apostle's argument, have realised the very misgiving which evidently sometimes haunted the writer, lest men should account of him above that which they heard from

him. To quote from Paul is easy, to understand him is difficult. To apply scraps of his discourse to modern controversies demands little study, but to penetrate into those ancient controversies, the collision between Christianity and Judaism, the contrast between the apostles at Jerusalem and the Apostle of the Gentiles, the danger which threatened the infant Church from the intrusion of a rash and groundless method of speculation, the controversies out of which almost all St. Paul's letters arose—this demands much patience and thought and a tincture of the historic sense. Thus to this day St. Paul is by many almost as often misused as used, and the great revelation delivered through him which we have, in this chapter, been endeavouring to outline, has been too often missed, in the confusion of questions which arise out of those parts of his writings that should not be treated as revelation at all. A saner method of treating St. Paul's writings will assuredly result in a far clearer conception of their revelation. He is among the many great men of the past who have more cause to reproach his friends than his enemies for the harm which has been inflicted upon him. The abuse and persecution in his lifetime did not hinder him half so much as the unthinking and servile adulation to which his letters have been subjected since his death.

CHAPTER XII.

ALEXANDRINE CHRISTIANITY.

In the *Epistle to the Hebrews* we have a most interesting illustration of a fact which the traditional view of the Scriptures has been too slow to recognise, viz., that the spiritual or religious value of a book does not necessarily depend on a knowledge of the author's personality or even of his name. No composition in the New Testament has more obvious marks of inspiration upon it, and very few contain more distinct and valuable elements of revelation, than *Hebrews*, and yet it is quite anonymous. In the complete absence of any clue to the identity of its author, prudence would suggest that its anonymity should be recognised as the starting-point of all inquiry. It chances that the completely uncritical writers of Alexandria assigned the work to Paul.[1] Tertullian, with equal authority, though this is saying

[1] *Clement Alexand.*, Strom. ii. 2. 4, vi. 8.

very little, assigned it to Barnabas.[1] Luther, with as much reason as his predecessors thirteen centuries before, assigned it to Apollos. But it is open to any ingenious person to assign it to Luke or to Aquila or to any other of the circle which surrounded the great Apostle, for the one point which is clear in the matter of its authorship is that it comes from one who was conversant with St. Paul's friends[2] and was familiar with St. Paul's writings.[3] M. Renan still favours the view of Tertullian, and believes that the eloquent and flowing style is very appropriate to the stately personage who is presented to us in the Acts under the name of Barnabas. English divines have in late years accepted Luther's opinion, and have seen a special appropriateness in ascribing the composition to one who was "mighty in the Scriptures." Some of these divines now speak as if the authorship of Apollos were a settled fact, and build up arguments after their manner on this hypothetical foundation. Why not? Anything is better than the dogmatism of the received Canon, which ascribes the Epistle to St. Paul. We cannot be certain that it was not written by Barnabas; we cannot

[1] *De Pudicitia*, ch. 20. [2] Heb. xiii. 23.

[3] Heb. x. 30 is, it will be noticed, a quotation of St. Paul's "scripture" in Rom. xii. 19, a scripture which does not occur in any book known to us, but was probably a general summary of two or three expressions (Lev. xix. 18; Deut. xxxii. 35; Prov. xxiv. 29) such as is not uncommon in St. Paul's letters.

be certain that it was not written by Apollos; if any one chooses to maintain that it was written by Demas, no decisive refutation can be offered. But we can be quite certain that it was not written by St. Paul. The substance, the style, the method, all forbid it; not to mention that if it had been St. Paul's it would not in Eusebius' day have been ranked with the Books of *Wisdom* and *Ecclesiasticus*, &c., as one of the *Antilegomena*.[1] Nor has this false ascription only the disadvantage of being wrong; it has the greater disadvantage of destroying one of the most valuable features of the book. It is just because the work is not Paul's that it is of such special interest. It is as an inspired, though unnamed, voice from the Apostolic times that we can claim it as a fresh witness to the facts which were then most surely received. By merging this witness in Paul we miss the confirmation which is derived from a multiplicity of writers, and we lose the demonstration of this interesting fact, that "Paul's Gospel" was not only his, but was received and accepted, and in some degree assimilated, by many other minds. If the author, in order to give weight to his argument, had thrown it into the form of a Pauline letter, and had written it in St. Paul's name, we should still have been bound to admit that it was not Paul's—we should have ranked the letter

[1] *Euseb.* H. E., vi. 13.

with the *Pseudepigraphical* Literature. But in this case we are not required to make this step in classification, for the author makes no pretence to be St. Paul, or to be any one but himself, and it is for us simply to accept this remarkable work from Apostolic times as anonymous, and to reverently investigate the revelation,—its kind, its degree, its limitations,—which is in this way conveyed to us. In proportion as we really believe that the Spirit of God speaks through these New Testament writings we shall hold lightly to the mere traditions concerning authorship, circumstance, and interpretation, which have unfortunately been permitted to grow about the book as the mean and irrelevant buildings have been suffered like excrescences to grow on the walls of the great cathedral at Antwerp.

Now we may observe at once a note of difference between our author and St. Paul. He does not draw upon the immediacy of Revelation, as his great master did. Revelation to him is not so much subjective as objective. St. Paul always gives us the impression that he was in the habit of retiring into the Spirit's secret cell, where he received of the Lord the things which he communicates to men. It is not so with the author of *Hebrews*. His revelation belongs rather to the category of intellectual illumination. He brings, if we may say so, the power of sanctified

thought to play upon the facts of the Incarnation and the Atonement. His letter is the beginning of Christian speculation. He no longer, like the apostles themselves, speaks what he has seen or what he has heard, but rather what he has thought. This is at once his strength and his weakness; his strength because the activity of thought is one of God's most effective ways of revealing Himself to men, but his weakness too, because about all thought there is a fallibility and a limitation. When St. Paul speaks about the Christ revealed within, he is touching on an infallible certainty and on an illimitable, an inexhaustible, source of revelation. But when our author touches upon the interpretation of Christ's historical advent, and of Christ's relation to the Old Covenant, he is moving in a field where finality and infallibility are no longer possible, and the reader is obliged to recognise that at some shadowy line he is carried over from pure revelation into the region of human speculation. Thus the revelation of the *Hebrews* is of a different quality from that in St. Paul; it is not so verifiable; its certainty rests rather on its probability to the individual reader than on the immediate witness of the Spirit. One may learn more from *Hebrews* than from *Galatians*, but what we learn is not so vital: it ranks rather with the teaching with which God has enriched the Church in the writings

of its great doctors than with those startling revelations which are given in the person of St. Paul, and still more in the word and work of the Lord Himself.

Now what, in brief, is the revelation of this book? The Temple, we may suppose, was destroyed, or its destruction was imminent: the fateful year 70 A.D. was in sight, just approaching or just past. The religion which had found its centre in Jerusalem since the days of Ezekiel and Ezra was to be submerged; its priesthood was to disappear; its sacrifices were to cease; its Law, if it should be kept at all, was no longer to be kept in the old way, for its central idea of a ritual which symbolised its spirit would be no longer capable of realisation in practice. The Christians who drew their inspiration from Jerusalem were Jews also, and regarded the Old Covenant with as much veneration as the New; they had been continually in the Temple, and they had not severed themselves from its institutions; they had kept the Law, as James informs St. Paul in the *Acts*. Now St. Paul's attitude towards this large body of believers was one of an indulgent but rather impatient toleration. He did not know what they had to do with these "rudiments of the world." The Law had as an obedient slave brought them to Christ. Now let it be dismissed; after all it was a poor instrument

of terror rather than a means of grace; it was allied rather with the sin which it evoked and emphasised than with the righteousness, the unattainable righteousness, which it demanded.[1] In his eager polemic the Apostle of the Gentiles had treated the Law as a mere episode, added for transgressions, which rather obscured than illustrated the Old Covenant of faith made with Abraham.[2] All this was very irritating, and by no means edifying, to the Jewish Christians, who saw in James of Jerusalem their ideal and their leader. And when the shock actually came, and the venerable institutions of the Law and the Prophets were submerged beneath the tides of war and revolution, they were not likely to derive much comfort from the great Apostle, who had been for thirty years foreseeing and anticipating the event by building his system of religion on a new foundation which practically ignored the old. But obviously a more conciliatory voice was needed in this epoch of change; and it was to come, not from St. Paul, but from his circle, from a man who had imbibed St. Paul's ideas, but yet had, by what we may call a breadth of culture, the power to sympathise with the old order that was changing, and the insight to see its relation with the new order that had come. He possessed

[1] Gal. iii. 23–iv. 11. [2] Gal. iii. 18.

the spirit which is essential to a mediator between extreme schools of thought. There is something in his eloquence which soothes the listener. His argument is the more persuasive because it is felt as an undercurrent in a general exhortation rather than directed ostentatiously to the people who are to be convinced. His main theme is introduced almost as an episode or an illustration in what appears to be simply a call to holiness and watchfulness. His main theme evidently is that the Old Covenant was imperfect—a shadow of good things to come—but that Christ was the substance which had been thus foreshadowed. The Old Covenant had been a copy of things in heaven, a visible and therefore imperfect transcript, but Christ and His work were the invisible and perfect pattern from which the copy had been taken. The seen was passing away; but the unseen had now been revealed to the eye of faith, and might be practically grasped by this master faculty of knowing. The burden of his message is therefore the incompleteness of the Law[1] and all its institutions, the perfection and completeness of the New Covenant through Christ, in which the Law has been fulfilled. But this which is evidently his main theme is not obtrusively presented. There is no disparagement of the Old,

[1] Heb. vii. 19; ix. 10; x. 1.

no impatience with it. Rather the Jewish Christian, viewing the matter in this light, would feel that the Old Covenant was bettered in the New, and would cease to regret that the shadow was passing since now the substance was revealed. Christ is our peace, as St. Paul would say; and no writing of the New Testament more beautifully illustrates the truth than this. In Him the zealot of the Law could justify the zeal of the Law by becoming zealous for Him. How could one better glorify the venerable system of Judaism than by seeing in it an age-long prophecy of the supreme revelation?

But there are some more specific features in the book which the Christian consciousness has in all times recognised as revelation in the purest and most literal sense. Among these may be mentioned first of all the mode in which the ancient Scriptures are used. The whole Epistle teems with quotations and allusions. Like a true Hellenist, the author seldom refers to the Hebrew Bible, but uses the Septuagint translation, and some of his most beautiful applications are derived from that translation, or sometimes mistranslation, of the Scriptures; as, for instance, where he quotes the 104th Psalm to show the position of the angels.[1] But what a won-

[1] The translation of the LXX., ὁ ποιῶν τοὺς ἀγγέλους αὐτοῦ πνεύματα, is a beautiful misrendering of the poet's thought. The

derful turn he gives to many of these quotations! As long as we remember that this is not exegesis, but simply a free use, or a conventional interpretation, of familiar words, what a power there is in this imperious application of the Scriptures to the matter in hand! This writer has taught us to use many of the Psalms and Proverbs in a new sense, as the language which might be appropriate in the lips of Jesus; and if he has not shown that the authors had any such thought in their minds, he has at least helped us to see how the thought of God is able to work through the thoughts of men, and to make unconscious utterances of His servants a prophetic prelude of His highest self-manifestation. Never was this constructive interpretation put to nobler account than in the magnificent use which our author makes of Melchizedek, the King of Salem. Employing the mysterious reference of a Psalm to this primitive king as a bridge between the person of Christ and the ancient record in the Book of Genesis, he makes the very fragmentariness, the shadowy outline, and the historical indeterminateness of Melchizedek a startling illustration of the Supernatural Priesthood of our Lord. And so again, no New Testament writer has made such

Psalmist meant that God makes winds into His messengers. The Alexandrine translator took it to mean that God made His angels spirits.

use of that prophecy of Jeremiah, which was, as we saw, the very summit of Old Testament prediction (Heb. viii. 8–13, x. 16). It was reserved for our anonymous author to climb the loftiest height of Old Testament Messianic expectation, and to say, pointing to Jesus, "See how it is now fulfilled."

And this leads us to another feature of revelation in our book, which, but for the Epistle to the Hebrews, would have been very imperfectly understood. Our author sets Moses, the Levitical priesthood, the Altar, Sacrifices, Veil, Mercy Seat, &c., of the Old Covenant in distinct contrast with Christ, and he shows, in a detailed argument, the value of which is even yet scarcely apprehended, how all these features of the older worship are combined in that Divine Person, and how, to understand Him, it is necessary to bring together all the ideas which were typified by these various forms. Moses was great, but he was only as a steward who dealt with the copy; Christ is the Master of the house, and is Himself the pattern from which the copy was taken. The Levitical Priesthood had its place as a witness, and the sacrifices and the altar were all shadows of spiritual truths; but Christ is the Priest *and* the Sacrifice, and, by a kind of afterthought, the altar too.[1] Nay, by a

[1] Heb. xiii. 10.

straining of metaphors, His flesh is the veil of the inner sanctuary, and His Spirit within is the Mercy Seat or propitiatory, which in the old dispensation could only be approached by the priest, but now can be touched by every one who believes in Jesus.

The careless reader is apt to see something fanciful in this seeming allegory. A spirit of rationalism which regards the Old Covenant as a mere growth of human institutions will see in the argument an apology for Judaism which is essentially a product of reverent reflection. But for the Christian—and it is for a Christian, be it observed, that such a letter as this is written—here is evidently the true note of revelation, the revelation which consists in interpreting God's revelation to men. There is the Divinely-given system of Judaism—that in its time was a revelation of God. Here is the Divinely-given Son, the supreme revelation of God. Our author shows distinctly how the former foreshadowed the latter, and how the latter has fulfilled the former. The firmness and distinctness with which the argument is conducted, and the light which breaks in upon these ways of God to men, may be called a revelation, can indeed be called nothing less.

We might say, too, that the idea of faith—as the *substantia speratorum*, as the proof of the Unseen—is, in its illuminating force, a revelation, or, at any

rate, the presentation of the instrument by which revelation is made. This idea is not, needless to say, St. Paul's. Even a very hasty reader is soon aware that in reading Heb. xi. he is not moving in quite the same groove of thought as when he is studying Rom. v. But because St. Paul gave to the word πίστις a peculiar and almost technical meaning, there was the more need for one Apostolic writer at least to develope the broader and simpler sense of the word. We must all have felt an almost overstrained subtilty in St. Paul's way of identifying Abraham's faith, which was counted to him as righteousness, with the saving faith of which his Epistle is all along speaking. There seems only the connection of a name between the spiritual attitude of trusting God in a crisis of life such as that which is recorded of Abraham, and that inward principle assimilating the whole life and work of Jesus, which the Apostle regards as the essence of his evangel. But in our author we are no longer mystified. Faith becomes a very simple matter, and we can see its identity in Abraham, Moses, and all the ancient saints, with that which is manifested in the Christian believer. Where faith means the firm assurance that God is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him, and the resulting habit of walking as seeing Him that is invisible, we have

a platform of approach for many minds to whom the deeper thought of Paul is at present unintelligible.

There is, then, very little difficulty in discerning the elements of revelation which present themselves in the Epistle to the Hebrews; there is no possibility that a careful and unprejudiced reader, taking into account all the conditions of the problem, could fail to see that our anonymous author is inspired, and that God has used him to convey to the Church truths of inestimable value, which would not have been known to us apart from this operation of the Spirit. If the truths are not of the supreme importance of those which we have traced in the Gospels and in the Pauline Epistles, they are yet, as complementary and interpretative to those supreme truths, quite invaluable. We all unhesitatingly give our verdict with the Church of all ages which has counted the book as a part of revelation; though we were bound to question the dogmatism of the Alexandrian fathers, and the subsequent traditionalism of the Canonists in attributing the Epistle to St. Paul.

But as the positive revelation of the book is thus secured by a candid inquiry, the same kind of inquiry compels us to observe the limitations, the imperfections, and even, it may be, the mistakes which

are incident to all human instrumentality. Here, as in all the books of the Bible, we have to recognise that a statement is not true because it occurs in the Bible; it occurs in the Bible because it is true; and as the truth conveyed through human minds is necessarily mixed with the qualities of the medium, we best serve the cause of truth by trying accurately to distinguish what is Divine truth and what is human imperfection. No greater disservice to truth can be imagined than that which has too often been rendered, when theologians, starting from the position that every utterance of an inspired writer is infallibly inspired, have proceeded to build up a whole system of dogma on precisely the most questionable parts of the Scripture. It has been characteristic of much amateur theology, that it has made the most of all those books in the Bible, and all those passages in the books, which betray the infirmities or limitations of the authors, while the broad and unmistakable lines of their revelation have been practically ignored. The relevancy of this remark appears, directly we turn to some of the incidental features of our book.

For example, the author, like St. Paul and St. Luke,[1] refers to the rabbinical interpretation of Deut. xxxiii. 2, which represented the Law as given

[1] Gal. iii. 19; Acts vii. 53.

to Moses by the mouth of angels (Heb. ii. 2). Now on the traditional plan of interpreting Scripture these passing references to that belief are regarded as a declaration, vouched for by the Holy Ghost, that this was the method of the giving of the Law to Moses. According to the simpler, and, we may add, saner, view of inspired writing, these references only show that the writers were acquainted with the Jewish tradition on the subject, and alluded to it without any intention of passing a critical verdict on its veracity. But if this is the right way of regarding the matter, we shall not be at liberty to accept the statements made in Heb. xi. about Abraham and the other worthies as additional historical facts with which we may supplement the narratives of Genesis, Judges, &c. All we can conclude is that our author was saturated with such writings as abounded in Alexandria, which sought to read into those early records a rich spiritual or theological significance. If Philo elaborates the story of Abraham in this manner no one thinks that he is giving historical details; he is simply treating the subject homiletically. Our author uses the old materials in the same way. We cannot treat these references as a religious vindication of Rahab, or Gideon, or Samson, or Jephthah. We can only say that the spiritualised version of the

stories concerning them gave to the writer a series of illustrations which showed what faith is, just as in xi. 37, 38 he refers to the sufferings and martyrdoms which are recorded in the Book of Maccabees. His reference to this last book does not prove that it was inspired or infallible, nor does his reference to similar books, in which the traditions of Abraham and the rest were treated in an edifying way, put the stamp of history upon those stories. The way in which allegorisers were accustomed to deal with these narratives in the Ancient Scriptures comes out in the handling of the Melchizedek episode. We must not mistake for Divine inspiration the thoroughly Alexandrine method of our author by which he shows that Levi in a sense paid tithes to Melchizedek, because he was in the loins of his father (vi. 9, 10). It was a religious truth of the highest value—a revealed truth, indeed—that the priesthood was to yield to Christ, and pass away before His fulfilment of its functions; but the fanciful attempt to maintain that this was prefigured in the offering made by Abraham to Melchizedek does not add force to the truth, and if it be mistaken for something more than a trait of that Alexandrine mode of dealing with the Scriptures, to which reference has been made, may even in thoughtful minds create a prejudice against the truth. It is necessary always to

remember that an author, even when he is inspired, is not lifted completely out of the atmosphere of the age in which he lives; and even when the curtain rises and he sees as in a vista great new truths, the proscenium, and the wings, and much of the scenic apparatus of his vision, will still belong to his own time, and must be distinguished from the revelation which he sees.

We enter, of course, far more questionable ground when we come to criticise any of the positive and deliberate truths taught by such an inspired writer as this. But it is necessary to be on our guard in interpreting the well-known doctrine of Heb. vi. 1–8, x. 26, 27. And if the doctrine itself did not give us pause, the use which has been made of it, and the effect which has often been produced by it, might constrain our consideration. Our author is throughout imbued with the stern spirit of the Old Law. To him Christianity itself appears as a transfigured Judaism, and the echoes of Old Testament severities are constantly in his ears. In realising the untold blessings of the New Covenant and the great contrast between Mount Zion and Mount Sinai, between the Old Congregation and the New Church, he leaves nothing to be desired; but when he comes to deal with those who are outside the Covenant the sternness of Judaism reasserts itself. Thus in the severe

sentence, "If we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment" (x. 26), we seem to hear an echo of the priestly excommunication in Num. xv. 30, 31, "The soul that doeth aught with a high hand, . . . the same blasphemeth the Lord, and that soul shall be cut off from among his people." It is as if our author were quoting the ancient anathema without quite realising how much more terrible it is, when applied to the final judgment of souls, than when it refers only to exclusion from the national covenant of Israel.

Now we cannot deny that this sentence and the more explicit statement in vi. 4–6 put a strait limitation upon the mercy and even the power of God. They imply that a Christian who has fallen away cannot be restored. They would even countenance the position taken up by Tertullian and his party, who refused to receive apostates back into the Church. Not only does this doctrine present God in a Jewish rather than a Christian aspect, but strange to say it seems at variance with the teaching and practice of St. Paul. One of the most striking episodes in the Letters to the Corinthians is the case of a Christian who had fallen away, and had sinned wilfully. The Apostle insists on the excommunication

of the offender; but he equally insists later on that he shall be restored. In the First Epistle of John —which, curiously enough, recognises that there may be a sin unto death, for which we must not pray— occur the words, "My little children, these things write I unto you that ye may not sin. And if any man sin we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John ii. 1). This is inconsistent with our author, who says that if we sin voluntarily—and an involuntary offence is certainly not the sin of which John speaks—after we have known the truth, there remains no more a sacrifice for sin; Jesus is no longer a propitiation for us; we have nothing to expect but "the fierceness of fire." But the most serious difficulty of all is, that the history of Christianity has not confirmed this statement, and the most earnest believers in Christ have not acted on its teaching. For—we may thank God—it has been no uncommon thing for men and women, after a Christian experience which accords quite accurately with the expressions in vi. 4, 5, though they have fallen into sin, and become opponents of the Gospel, and have done despite to the Spirit of Grace, yet afterwards to be brought to repentance, to be moved again by the pardoning love of God, and to lay hold afresh of the covenant which they seemed to have counted an unclean thing. The

Church has never consented to leave apostates and backsliders to their fate, but has always felt that in seeking them and winning them to a new repentance she has been carrying out the will of her Lord, who delighted to dwell on the great property of God, which had been described in the prophets, the property of mercy and forgiveness, not merely to seven times, but to seventy times seven.

Here, then, is a very serious issue. Our author advances a doctrine which seems at variance with the Idea of God given to us elsewhere in the New Testament, with the direct teaching of St. Paul and St. John, with the practice, and even with the experience, of the Christian Church ever since—a doctrine which has only been seriously held by certain extreme sects, and has then resulted in a cruel and unpardonable fanaticism. From this issue arises a crucial question. Is this doctrine, advanced by the Epistle to the Hebrews, to be regarded as a direct revelation of the will of God, because the Epistle is found in our Canon, and the doctrine occurs in the Epistle; or are we to treat it as a judgment passed by the writer, a judgment which, however sincere, can claim no more infallibility than other judgments which are passed by good and earnest men? Strange to say, the theory of Orthodoxy would decide in favour of the first alternative, but the practice of even Ortho-

doxy itself has always decided in favour of the second.

In answering this crucial question—a question which is typical in our dealing with the subject of revelation—we must try to be perfectly clear, perfectly candid with ourselves, and perfectly willing to accept even an unwelcome conclusion if conviction leads us in that direction. To begin with, there are at least three passages in the teaching of our Lord Himself which give a certain colour to the doctrine here advanced (see Matt. v. 13, xii. 31, 32, and 45). The Lord said that believers who had been the salt of the earth, if they lost their savour, became useless and fit only to be trodden under foot of man. The Lord said that there is a blasphemy against the Holy Ghost which cannot be forgiven in this age or the next. The Lord said that when the evil spirit had been cast out of a man, if it took other spirits worse than itself and returned, the last state of the man would be worse than the first. Nothing can exceed the solemnity of these statements; nothing can exceed their reasonableness; nothing can be truer to experience. Is it possible that our author had them in mind when he wrote Heb. vi. 1–8 and x. 26? If he had, then he has made a significant addition in the way of exposition. He has identified this condition of savourlessness, this blasphemy against the Holy

Ghost, this re-possession of the unclean spirit, with simply "falling away" or "sinning," and he has concluded from the words of our Lord that the Saviour would not or could not renew such backsliders to repentance. Now if this is the explanation of the passage before us, the simple question is whether this application of the Lord's thought comes from the Lord Himself through the author of the Epistle, or is simply an interpretation which the writer gave on his own responsibility.

The answer which the general course of our investigation suggests is this: If we are right in understanding the author to mean, that voluntary sin, after a true conversion, is a final bar to a new repentance and to new belief in the propitiation which has been made for sin—the sins of the whole world,—then we can only conclude that his teaching is not a revelation, for it is not reconcilable with the whole gist of the revelation of God in Christ. We must suppose that, deeply impressed with the heinousness of apostasy, and probably having before his eyes the recklessness, the blasphemies, the effrontery of certain individuals who had deserted the faith, he drew a general inference that repentance after such a fall was impossible; an inference which a larger knowledge of the Divine pity and patience and power shows to be incorrect. Here, then, is a case in which, so far from

believing that a doctrine must be a Divine revelation because it occurs in the New Testament, we are forced to the opinion that *if* it occurs in the New Testament it is not a revelation, but merely a view of the author's, imperfect and limited as the judgments of even inspired men are apt on occasion to be. In other words, the Revelation of God as a whole, the Revelation in its crowned completeness, must be used as a criterion for determining the value of individual passages in the Scriptures ; it can never be admitted that a single passage or even a small group of passages, teaching a special doctrine, may override the truth in its entirety when its full development is reached.

But while this answer is given unhesitatingly, as an illustration of the way in which we are bound to deal with Writings, human in form and accident, though Divine in spirit and general purpose, it must be observed that the verdict is quite hypothetical—it is "*if* this doctrine is taught in the New Testament, *if* it occurs in the passage before us." It is open for us to maintain that our author does not mean what has usually been thought. And if we arrive at such a conclusion without any bias, without any preconceived purpose to twist his words into harmony with the truth as a whole, without any wilful determination to maintain our view of revelation and its

infallibility, even at the cost of all honesty in exegesis, then we may still answer our question in accordance with that first alternative, and may still regard the passage as revelation. Now having vindicated the perfect freedom of the spirit in a question of this kind, we may perhaps, as a matter of exegesis, point out that quite conceivably our author's thought is very different from what is commonly supposed, and his statements in these passages are not so much a revelation as the assertion of an overwhelmingly important but obvious truism. It is quite conceivable that his idea is simply to assert, that unless our faith in Christ is accompanied by the victory over sin, our so-called faith is not only without saving power, but is even a hindrance to our receiving the faith which saves. It may be freely admitted that the expressions and the use of the participles are so ambiguous that no certainty can be attached to this or any other interpretation: and in this sense it is somewhat unmeaning to describe the passage as a revelation, for a truth, which is not even unambiguously stated, cannot be said to be revealed. But at any rate the possibility of this interpretation relieves us from saying that the doctrine which has been derived from the passage is part of revelation. Let us just re-read the passage in its simple literalness. Our author

says that we, as Christians, must make for *perfection* (τελειότης), *i.e.*, the condition of mastery over sin on which the Apostle Paul so frequently dwells; because "it is impossible, if we continue in sin after our enlightenment and our experience of the heavenly gift (*i.e.*, of salvation), and our share in the Holy Ghost, and our experience of God's word and the powers of the future life, for us to be again renewed to repentance; we have fallen away; under the impression that we are Christians, and therefore not in the way of seeking salvation, we are really living a life which crucifies the Son of God, and maligns Him to the world." In other words, a spiritual experience, as it is called, apart from an actual victory over sin, is the one effectual bar to a real conversion. Unless justification implies sanctification, it is a decisive hindrance to a real repentance. And then it is said further, in x. 26, "For if we continue to sin voluntarily" (it is a present participle, not an aorist), "after receiving the knowledge of the truth"—*i.e.*, if after we have accepted the atonement of Christ we yet remain in our sins, the one way of being saved, which is faith in Christ's sacrifice, is foreclosed against us. Our faith, which is no faith, has no saving power, and though we shelter ourselves, as we should say, under the Cross, unsaved, uncleansed, sinful, and defiled, we have

nothing to expect but the judgment and the penalty which will fall on the avowed adversaries of God.

The present writer by no means ventures to affirm that this is the meaning of the passage ; all he would suggest is that if this should be the meaning, the passage might be regarded among the most vital parts of revelation, while if the generally accepted interpretation is correct, the passage must take its place among those opinions or speculations on Divine things which are not confirmed by experience.

CHAPTER XIII.

JAMES, PETER, JUDE.

THE well-known judgment which Luther passed on *James*, as a book which was undeserving of a place in the Bible, will not be accepted by any competent authority to-day, but it is of great value and interest nevertheless. It reminds us how free the great reformer was from the bondage in which many Protestants at the present time are held. Luther never for a moment thought that the rejection of a book from the Bible was a rejection of the Bible; and how sternly would he have rebuked the rash and baseless dogmatism which says that to question a part of the Scripture is to shake the authority of the whole! He was led to question the *Epistle of James* precisely because he felt that the authority of the whole was imperilled by its inclusion in the Canon. He saw clearly what many orthodox persons to-day profess that they do not see: he saw that there is a contrast amounting

to antagonism between the presentation of the Gospel in the Epistles of St. Paul, and the presentation of the Gospel in the Epistle of James. A larger view may embrace the two opposites in one rounded thought and find the circle of truth extended by the very conflict of different opinions; but it is evidently better, with Luther, to reject one of the opposites from the Canon than to juggle with language and to hoodwink ourselves by maintaining that there is no real opposition between them.

That eloquent and ingenious writer, Archdeacon Farrar, for example, in his *Early Days of Christianity*, reconciles St. Paul and St. James by showing that the two writers use the words "faith," "works," and "justify," but give to them each a connotation of his own. St. Paul uses them in a technical sense, and St. James uses them in the ordinary sense. Thus the statement of the one, that we are "justified by faith, and not by works," is quite reconcilable with the statement of the other, that we are "justified by works, and not by faith"—each statement is equally a revelation from God, and equally inspired by the Holy Ghost—because when Paul says "faith" he does not mean what James means when he says "faith"; when Paul speaks of "works" he is dealing with an idea which was not in the mind of James at all; and when the

two use the term "justify" they are not referring to the same process or the same result. All this may be, and indeed is, perfectly true; but it does not help the plain person to form a clear idea of inspiration, for it evidently suggests the inquiry, If the Holy Ghost had been the author of both the passages in question, would He not either have used different terms to express different ideas, or at least have reconciled the antagonism by showing that a new meaning was put into the common language?

But from the point of view which we are at present occupying, the whole of this harmonistic method is unnecessary and irrelevant. We are not concerned to force these two books of the New Testament into a truce and to cover them with the decent mantle of a harmony. Our simple inquiry is this: The *Epistle of James* occurs in our canon of Scripture; in what sense is it a revelation of God, and what are the elements of revealed truth contained in it?

To begin with, this Epistle, like the one we were examining in the last chapter, does not come from an Apostle. Tradition says that the author was that James, the brother of the Lord, whom we find in the *Acts* at the head of the Church in Jerusalem. But our author describes himself merely as a "slave

of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ." If he was the brother of Jesus, or the "bishop" of Jerusalem, he evidently declines to base his authority on these facts. He writes simply as a Christian man. Again, his letter is addressed not to a Christian Church or to the Christian churches in general, but to the Jewish people as such, or at any rate the Jewish people outside of Jerusalem.[1] But what is so striking in this composition is that there is hardly any reference to the peculiarly Christian doctrine which formed the burden of St. Paul's teaching. There is a remote reference to the New Birth in i. 18, but this "begetting by the word of truth" is not connected with Christ, and indeed that dear name, which teems in every other Apostolic writing, is mentioned but twice (i. 1, ii. 1), and then only in a somewhat allusive manner. The moral maxims which in St. Paul would have been directly connected with the truth of the new status in Christ, the new creation demanding new products, are by St. James impressed upon his readers purely from what one may call an Old Testament standpoint, and connected with an Old Testament motive. If he

[1] "The twelve tribes which are of the dispersion" (James i. 1) is, according to some interpreters, the writer's way of describing the scattered Christians. This would be very much as if a Protestant writer, appealing to Protestants, were to address them as "the members of the Roman Catholic Church"—that is, his object would evidently be, *not* to be understood.

wants an example of patience or of prayer, he goes, not to Jesus, but to the Prophets, Elijah, Job.

But there is a feature of this letter more singular still. It teems with allusions to two books which we do not count "Scripture" at all—*Ecclesiasticus* and the *Book of Wisdom*. It may be worth while to show in detail this relation of our Epistle with the *Apocrypha* by putting the references in parallel columns :—

James i. 5: "God, who giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth not."	Ecclus. xx. 15: "The fool giveth little and upbraideth much"; and xlii. 22: "After thou hast given, upbraid not."
James i. 8, 10: "A double-minded man unstable in all his ways," "brother of low degree."	Ecclus. i. 28: "Distrust not the fear of the Lord when thou art poor, and come not unto him with a double heart."
James i. 10, 11: "As the flower of the grass he shall pass away; . . . the flower thereof faileth."	Wisd. i. 7, 8: "Let no flower of the spring pass by us, let us crown ourselves with rosebuds before they be withered"; vii. 8: "What hath pride profited?"
James i. 13: "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God."	Ecclus. xv. 11: "Say not thou it is through the Lord that I fell away; for thou oughtest not to do the things that he hateth."
James i. 17: "No variation, neither shadow of turning."	Wisd. vii. 18: "The alterations of the turning (of the sun)."
James i. 19: "Let every man be swift to hear."	Ecclus. v. 11: "Be swift to hear, and let thy life be sincere."
James i. 23: The looking glass.	Ecclus. xii: 11: "Thou shalt be unto him as if thou hadst wiped a looking glass."
James i. 26: Bridling the tongue.	Ecclus. xx. 7: "A wise man will hold his tongue till he see opportunity."
James ii. 21: "Was not Abraham our father justified by works,	Wisd. x. 5: "Moreover (Wisdom) found out the righteous and

in that he offered up Isaac his son on the altar?"

James iii. 5, 6: The passage about the tongue: "How much matter is kindled by how small a fire!"

James iii. 8: "A restless evil, full of deadly poison."

James iv. 14: "Ye are a vapour that appeareth for a little and then vanisheth."

James v. 1–6: The rebuke of the rich oppressors: "The cries of them that reaped have entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth."

preserved him blameless unto God, and kept him strong against his tender compassion towards his son."

Ecclus. xxviii. 10: "As the matter of the fire is, so it burneth"; ver. 12: "If thou blow the spark it shall burn"; ver. 18: "Many have fallen by the edge of the sword, but not so many as have fallen by the tongue"; ver. 19: "Well is he that is defended from it, and hath not passed through the venom of it."

Wisd. v. 13, 14: "As soon as we were born we began to draw to our end, . . . like as the smoke which is dispersed here and there with a tempest."

Wisd. ii. 1–24: The rich determine to oppress the righteous man who "professeth to have the knowledge of God, and calleth himself the child of the Lord, . . . and maketh his boast that God is his Father."

To these numerous reminiscences of the *Apocrypha* we may add the quotation which James introduces with the expression, "Think ye that the Scripture speaketh in vain?" (iv. 5), for the words which he cites are not contained in any Scriptures that have come down to us, nor is it possible for us to definitely fix their meaning.[1]

[1] Πρὸς φθόνον ἐπιποθεῖ τὸ πνεῦμα ὃ κατῴκισεν ἐν ἡμῖν. As we do not know the original context of the passage we can only determine its application by the connection in which it is quoted. The idea seems to

Our letter, then, is from the pen of a Jewish Christian, in whom Judaism retains an equal balance with the new faith; it is addressed to Jews as such; it does not advance any distinctively Christian doctrine, but rather applies and expounds the Old Testament writings, including certain valuable books which have not found their way into the Canon of the Protestant Churches. And further, as was implied in the beginning, a brief passage (ii. 14–26) is introduced which seems expressly written to correct the onesidedness of St. Paul's mystical and inspired doctrine, that we are saved not by works, but by faith.

Now, facing the problem as it is thus presented to us, we certainly should find it difficult to say what revelation was given in this Epistle which was not given in other ways through other inspired men. In some respects we cannot help feeling that the whole tone of the Epistle is lower than the teaching of St. Paul; it lacks that burning sense of Spiritual Truth which supplies an impulse, as well as a direction, to right moral conduct. Christ crucified as the power of God unto salvation is conspicuously absent,

be that God is a jealous God, and can tolerate no rival in the heart—"jealously yearns the spirit which he put to dwell in us." This idea is so beautiful and so replete with New Testament significance that we can only regret the mischance which has robbed us of the Scripture whence it is quoted.

and we cannot resist the feeling that when the author puts the question, "Can that faith save him?" he has a very shadowy idea indeed of what St. Paul or St. John would have meant by "saving faith." In any sense, therefore, that this Epistle might be cited as an authority to override the fuller truths of the more mature teaching in the Scriptures we must unflinchingly deny to *James* the quality of revelation. He has told us no truths which we should not have known without his letter; and the truths on which he dwells are rather of a rudimentary order, truths which for the Christian are only absolutely valid when they are seen in the light of the Cross and its associated ideas. But because it is not revelation, as St. Paul's greatest utterances are revelation, it by no means follows that we should with Luther throw the book aside as "a letter of straw." It has an inspiration of its own—it has the practical value of a good sermon —and while it distinctly disclaims the infallibility which a foolish dogmatism has attached to it,[1] if we take it on its merits and read it for the truth which it contains, we shall find it, like other writings in the Bible, "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness."

It teems with allusions to the teaching of our

[1] Chap. iii. 2, πολλὰ γὰρ πταίομεν ἅπαντες.

Lord Jesus Christ.[1] Its precepts about patience, practical godliness, the restraint of the tongue, the essential equality of men in the Church, prayer and its answers, are invaluable. And its fearless denunciations of rich men who use their power to oppress the poor are in the spirit of the ancient prophets, and afford an admirable example for modern preachers to imitate. On the whole we cannot be sufficiently grateful that the doubt which existed about the genuineness of the Epistle even in the time of Eusebius, and the un-Pauline tone of its contents which excited the antipathy of Luther, have not availed to exclude it from our Canon; and if candour requires us to admit that it adds nothing to the body of revealed truth, gratitude impels us to maintain that it presents, with inspired eloquence and power, truths which are or ought to be familiar, but were and still are shamelessly neglected.

We may now turn to the Epistles which have come down to us under the name of Peter. We are at once confronted with a contrast between the letters of Paul and those of Peter. In St. Paul's case we know the man from his letters, and cannot hesitate to correct our impressions drawn from other sources by these autograph records. In St. Peter's case it is

[1] There are at least forty-two quotations from, or references to, the sayings and doings recorded in the Gospels.

different; we know him best from the Gospels and the *Acts of the Apostles*, and his writings do not tend to throw any light upon his personality. Quite the contrary: an obvious difficulty is suggested by them. Peter in the Gospels is within the inner circle of the Lord's disciples; received in the first instance by the Master with a new and significant name, he became in a very real sense, as the first to frankly confess Christ, the Rock on which the Church is built. It is true that he was guilty of a base denial, and St. Paul's allusion to him in *Galatians* reminds us that the rock was not naturally a very solid or rigid substance; but in the first days of the Church he was the chief preacher at Pentecost, the earliest to recognise the application of the Gospel to the Gentiles, and an indefatigable missionary of the good news to his own people. Under these circumstances we may confess to some disappointment in reading the Epistles that bear his name. They contain no new light on the Person of the Lord, with whom Peter was in daily contact throughout His ministry; they contain no new witness to the mystery of the work accomplished on Calvary; they do not in any way let us into the secret which led the Lord to choose Peter in so striking a manner, or led Peter to become the foremost of the disciples. Looking at the first of the two Epistles, we are

bound to admit that when we subtract all that is an echo of St. Paul, and all that seems a reduplication of expressions in St. James, there is comparatively little left which is distinctive, and nothing of the kind which might have been expected from the Peter who is depicted in the Gospels and *Acts*. It was from this tenuity of substance that Semler, and afterwards Cludius, at the beginning of this century, came to the conclusion that the Epistle could not be the work of Peter, but must be regarded as a Pseudepigraphical work originating from the earliest age of the Church. A Christian of the present day might be more disposed to raise an objection on the ground of the general argument which dominates the Epistle. The great work of Redemption is referred to more than once, but it is referred to incidentally. The sufferings of Christ are cited as an example[1] of patience and endurance for Christians who are in the midst of persecution. Where St. Paul would dilate with glowing gratitude on the great redemption, and on the love of God in Christ and the answering love of the purchased inheritors of grace, this author states the facts, and draws from them the conclusion, that we should "arm ourselves with the same mind" that was in Christ, and accept readily the fiery trial which is sent to prove us.

[1] Chaps. i. 3–7, 13; ii. 21; iii. 22; iv. 12, 13.

But this kind of objection based on internal qualities of the Scripture books is very arbitrary. There is no sufficient ground for questioning that this is really the writing of St. Peter. St. Peter was not St. Paul. He had not the same gifts of mind, or the same power of expressing himself in letters. He was not a great thinker, but only an earnest worker. To use the familiar distinction, he does not belong to the few voices, but to the many echoes, which are found in the Church and in the world. Notwithstanding his personal intercourse with the Lord—whose words, by the way, the Epistle shows, were constantly in his mind—he derived much of his Christian thought and of the language in which he expressed it from James, who had been during Christ's lifetime an unbeliever, and from Paul, who had never known Christ after the flesh. Perhaps the real significance of this letter is the limitation which is imposed by the personality of the vehicle on the revelation which the Spirit of God conveys to men.

Making full allowance for the disappointment to which allusion has been made, we may remark that this Letter of Peter's, if not as eminent among New Testament writings as its author was among New Testament men, is unquestionably an inspired and an invaluable work. Supposing it stood alone, the

sole literary product of Apostolic times, we could infer all the essential truths of Christianity from it. Unlike the Epistle of James, which is silent on the central truth, the Epistle of Peter so far presupposes it as to make it the subject of certain secondary applications. It presents the ethics of the Gospel in the purest and most beautiful light; for the new birth through the word of God is made the ground of a fervent mutual love, and from this brotherly love all the graces of the Christian life are seen to flow. Even St. Paul has not more powerfully connected the household duties of servants and masters, husbands and wives, with the great motive of the Cross.

Then it is to this Epistle we owe a doctrine which may indeed be described as a revelation, a revelation so startling and brilliant that the Church has not yet opened her eyes to its significance. The bearing of this revelation is only fully understood when the peculiar position of the writer is taken into account. St. Peter certainly occupied a position of eminence among the Apostles. The words which Jesus addressed to him were destined to be the proof text of a vast sacerdotal system. His unique apostolical position was to give the plea for the most powerful hierarchical monarchy which the world has ever seen. St. Peter is the first Pope according to the Roman Church, and to all the

priestly churches he is the fountain-head of the Apostolic succession, of the "three orders of ministry," and of that idea of the Church which lays the whole stress on a *clerus*, or clergy. It is this which gives such a singular emphasis to the veritably inspired—because obviously superhuman—doctrine of 1 Pet. ii. 1–10, v. 1–4. It is Peter, of all the apostles, who maintains that Christian men, as such, form the "spiritual house, the holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." It is the people of God, and not a special order among them, that may be called "an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation." It is Peter, of all the apostles, who, so far from mentioning three orders of ministry in which he would rank with the first, treats the whole Church as divided into Presbyters or Elders, and juniors or Deacons, and describes himself as a "fellow Presbyter." And it is Peter who, instead of exalting a *clerus*, or clergy, above ordinary Christians, gives that title to all the Christian community, and specially exhorts the Elders not to lord it over this chosen race, but to exercise their authority by means of suasion and a good example.[1] It is Peter, finally, that claims the title of Bishop for the Lord as the Chief Shepherd of the sheep (ii. 25), and reminds us

[1] 1 Pet. v. 3, *μήδ' ὡς κατακυριέυοντες τῶν κλήρων.*

how the true Episcopacy consists in feeding and tending the flock of the Chief Shepherd.

It is difficult, then, not to see in this letter of Peter's, which has been preserved for us, a warning made by the Spirit of God against those perversions and assumptions and claims which were one day to appear in the Church, and, curiously enough, to base themselves on the name of the Apostle, whose one undisputed work was the anticipatory condemnation of them.

There is another strikingly original allusion in this First Epistle, on which a distinguished living author thinks we may rest a doctrine of future probation.[1] The statement in 1 Pet. iii. 19, 20, and iv. 6, that Christ went and preached to the spirits in prison, viz., the dead, stands alone in the New Testament. Its meaning, so far from being clear, is open to many interpretations. If it be safe to infer from it that those who were disobedient in the days of Noah, received in Hades a visit from the Risen Christ—though the expression "while the ark was a pre-

[1] Farrar, *Early Days of Christianity*, vol. i. pp. 126, 140. Archdeacon Farrar claims this as a revelation, and only complains that Peter "unintentionally limited the fulness of his revelation" by speaking as if the only spirits in prison who received the preaching of the Risen Lord were those who perished in the flood of Noah. Such a mode of speech shows that so far as Peter's allusion can be called a revelation it only reveals that the unhappy Antediluvians received a call to repentance in the under-world.

paring" implies rather that Christ "in the Spirit" pleaded with the sinful men before the Flood—it is a far cry indeed to conclude from this doubtful allusion that all who die unrepentant will be evangelised in another world. If we could be sure that Peter meant this, it would still be open to question whether his authority could be accepted against the teaching of other apostles; but it is by no means clear that this was his meaning. The fact is that he, like the other apostles, was left in complete darkness about the ultimate destiny of the lost. And how forced the inference drawn from this one passage is, may be seen by looking only to the end of chap. iv., where Peter himself utters one of the most ominous of Bible utterances on the subject of the future—"If the righteous is scarcely saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?" Dr. Farrar's exuberant demonstration of his doctrine from this isolated passage is an excellent illustration of the arbitrariness to which the old doctrine of Inspiration and Revelation lent an authority. But it is not enough to get an isolated and doubtful text from a Biblical writer, to invest it with infallibility as the word of God, and then to proceed with the erection of a dogmatic system on this assured foundation. Even an inspired writer, the first of the apostles, may be in the dark about many things, as the very verse following the one we

have been considering shows (1 Pet. iv. 7: "The end of all things is at hand"). Revelation is not a mechanical structure presented in oracular utterances, but the great truth of God manifested through the imperfect medium of human minds and human tongues. If St. Peter was wrong in supposing, as other apostles did, that the end of the world was quite near, he may also have been wrong in supposing that "Christ preached to the spirits in prison." In the one case his opinion was refuted by time; in the other his opinion remains incapable of proof or refutation. But the fact to be firmly apprehended is, that fallibility on such questions as these does not invalidate the truth of that which forms the main burden of the Epistle. The truth of the new birth, which is a fact of experience to all those who believe in Jesus as the Saviour; the essential result of the new birth in a life of love and service and patience; the motive which our Lord's sufferings supply for longsuffering in the midst of trial; and the solemn assurance that even for believers who are in "the house of God" a judgment according to their deeds is inevitable;—remain as an explicit revelation of God's will which shines all the more clearly when it is disentangled from certain doubtful questions proceeding from the limitations of the author.

From this First Epistle of Peter, which may be

accepted as the work of the Apostle, we turn to the Second Epistle, which presents many serious difficulties. It is impossible to appreciate these difficulties without a close study of the original. The style and the phraseology are totally different from what are found in the First Epistle. The general situation is different from that which prevailed in the lifetime of Peter. Further, Dr. Abbott has shown with great plausibility that the author had read and studied Josephus, which carries us again beyond the limit of Peter's life. In accordance with these internal marks is the doubt in which the early Church found itself as to the genuineness of the letter. Even in the time of Eusebius, who tells us that Origen accepted it as authentic, it was still regarded as disputable. Jerome accepted it as Peter's, but felt the internal difficulty so strongly, that he adopted a good makeshift explanation, that Peter composed it only indirectly, the actual writer being one of his amanuenses.[1] Under these circumstances nothing could be more perverse or unintelligent than to make the acceptance of this as a genuine letter of Peter's an article of faith. Those who like to accept it without facing the difficulties which it presents should be careful not to condemn more thorough

[1] Duæ epistolæ quæ feruntur Petri stilo inter se et charactere discrepant structuraque verborum. Ex quo intelligimus pro necessitate rerum, diversis eum usum interpretibus. (Jerome, Epist. cxx., ad Hedebiam, Q. xi.)

inquirers who consider the difficulties insuperable. In the opinion of the present writer the origin of the letter is probably this: A convert of Peter's who possessed a letter of the Apostle's, in the generation following his master's death, issued it with certain applications of his own, suggested by the new circumstances of the time. There were false prophets among the people, Antinomians who turned their Christian faith into an occasion of sin; there were others who pointed to Peter's assertion that the end of the world was at hand, and made the refutation of that assertion by the facts a basis of scepticism; there were others who were making the same kind of use of the Epistles of St. Paul as has been made so often in later times. This letter, issued in the name of Peter, was designed to meet these abuses. It is evident that the recipients did not for a moment regard it as Peter's, and hence it failed to attain a place among undisputed Scriptures. The author had no intention to deceive when he wrote in the name of his august master. To call him a *falsarius* is a very gratuitous condemnation. There was enough in his letter actually the product of Peter's mind and word to justify his procedure; and if a later generation, entirely ignorant of the conditions which prevailed in Apostolic times, was to one day claim the whole letter as Peter's on the strength of these Petrine elements, and if a

later generation still was to make it an article of the Christian faith that Peter actually wrote the whole letter, that was not the fault of this humble disciple, who, writing in the name of the master that was dead, had no intention whatever of imposing on his readers, who knew as well as he did that Peter was dead years ago.

Now while this is the opinion of the present writer, he wishes to attach no undue importance to his opinion. The only vital point is to recognise that we are not compelled by our faith in the Bible to accept a tradition which has no sufficient support, but that we may judge impartially of the revelation which is contained in this letter even on the supposition that it had such an origin as has been suggested. The opening passage of our letter—whoever wrote it—is as inspired as anything that ever came from a human pen, and i. 12–21 contains none of those *ἅπαξ λεγόμενα*,[1] which make it difficult to believe that Peter was the author of the second chapter. This second chapter derives none of its vehemence or value from its authorship. Whether Peter wrote it or not, it remains precisely the same, a vigorous and even magnificent attack upon professing Christians who from interested motives turn

[1] Unless *ἐν τῇ παρούσῃ ἀληθείᾳ* (i. 12) must be treated as distinctive of a separate author.

the truth of God into a lie. The passage iii. 1–7 may, it is true, be a fragment of a letter of Peter's, but the amount of authentic revelation in it is not increased by this admission. Whoever wrote it was under the unscientific impression that the heavens were a solid substance capable of being destroyed by fire. On the other hand, the warning inserted in these crude cosmological conceptions, vers. 8, 9, is a revelation of the utmost value. If Peter wrote it, we learn from it that he had altered his opinion since he wrote 1 Pet. iv. 7. If, on the other hand, it was a disciple correcting his master, it gives us an illustration that God can use even an obscure and anonymous person to be the messenger of an inestimable truth. Whoever was first led to see that possibly a millennium or more would pass away before the Second Coming, was certainly taught of God, and has been instrumental in keeping the lamp of faith and expectation burning during these long ages of hope delayed.

And once again, whoever wrote the closing words of the Epistle, 2 Pet. iii. 16, is the earliest witness which Christian literature affords of the position which the Epistles of Paul were to take as Scriptures, on a level with the oracles of the Old Testament. If the view of criticism does not allow us to cite this passage as a testimony from St. Peter to the inspiration of Paul, it at least gives us permission to see in this

statement the proof that in the generation which immediately followed the death of Peter there was already an incipient New Testament Canon, so that Christian men could speak of "St. Paul's Epistles and the other Scriptures."

An attentive reader of 2 Peter will be left in little doubt that the author had before him and freely used the Epistle of Jude (see especially 2 Pet. ii. 11, and Jude 9). In fact one may almost say that Jude is embodied in 2 Peter. The violent denunciation of false teachers is the same, and couched in many of the identical, and very unusual, terms. Just as 1 Peter used and quoted the Epistle of James, 2 Peter uses and quotes the Epistle of Jude. The *Epistle of Jude* is quite a companion to the Epistle of James. The authors were evidently brothers (Jude 1). Neither of them was an apostle, and indeed Jude speaks almost as if the apostles belonged to a former generation (ver. 17). When we take also into account that the author quotes as an authority the apocryphal *Book of Enoch* (vers. 14, 15), and as it is supposed the apocryphal *Assumption of Moses* (ver. 9), we are at first surprised to find the little Epistle admitted into the Canon at all. In the days of Eusebius it was, with the Epistle of James, reckoned amongst the doubtful books (*ἀντιλεγόμενα*), though recognised by the majority of Christian Churches. Possibly the idea already implied by

Origen that the work was from the hand of the Apostle Jude secured its acceptance among Canonical books. But it is at least open to argument that this tiny production (ὀλιγόστιχον, as Eusebius calls it) won its way by its intrinsic merit. It is certainly "filled with the fortified words of the heavenly grace."[1] We may be permitted to think that in spite of the author being unapostolic, and perhaps even dubious, and in spite of the uncritical citation of apocryphal literature as if it were historically trustworthy, this eloquent utterance was so obviously inspired by the Holy Ghost, that it could claim and maintain a place among the Holy Scriptures. It is no wonder that the author of 2 Peter used it. It will never become obsolete as long as the Church sojourns in this present evil world, exposed to the seductions of false and interested teachers. It remains as the vehement and indignant repudiation for all time, of ungodly men who creep into the Church privily, "turning the grace of our God unto lasciviousness, and denying our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ." On the old and orthodox idea of revelation the Epistle would be discredited; for it is impossible to attach authoritative value to the implication that apocryphal works like the *Book of Enoch* and the

[1] Eusebius, *Comment in Matt.* (*Migne*, vol. iii. p. 877), πεπληρωμένην τῶν τῆς οὐρανίου χάριτος ἐῤῥωμένων λόγων.

Assumption of Moses are worthy of credit; and if every Bible writer must be infallible, and this Epistle were to be quoted as a proof that those compositions were trustworthy, there would be no course open to us but that of ejecting *Jude* from the Canon. But the truer and deeper view of revelation has rescued us from this necessity. We can freely admit that the author was mistaken in his quotation from the apocryphal works, we can admit that his reference to the events mentioned in vers. 6–9, 14–15, far from giving the stamp of historicity to them, only implies that he used examples from current literature as illustrations of the theme in hand; and yet we may stoutly maintain that the Epistle utters an authentic note which cannot be mistaken. Not only does the terrific denunciation, which detonates through these few sentences, hold good and applicable, a veritable word of God, but the few opening and closing verses are precious gems of inspired utterance and of revealed truth. The designation of Christians as "beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ," the exhortation "to contend earnestly for the faith once for all delivered to the saints," the beautiful idea of building ourselves up on our most holy faith, the expression "praying in the Holy Ghost," the command to keep ourselves in the love of God, the exquisite compassion and desire to save expressed in vers. 22, 23, and the

glorious commendation to God with which the letter closes, are glimpses of the things unseen, interpretations of that supernatural life which is produced in us by faith in Christ Jesus. And considering the singular brevity of the Epistle, and the special object of denouncing false teachers with which it was written, we may say that nowhere in all the Apostolic writings is more truth of revelation to be found in so small a compass, than in this fragment from the unknown Jude. As long as we are defending a theory that Jude is an apostle, for which there is no foundation, or another theory that if any work obtained a place in our Canon it is necessarily infallible in all its teaching and even in all its casual references, candid men will be so impressed with the weakness of the theory that they will hardly take the trouble to look at the Epistle itself. But directly we let the Letter speak, making no claim for it but what it makes for itself, the note of genuine inspiration in it, and the priceless gem of revelation which it contains, tell their own tale and leave us in no wonder that Jude found a place in the Canon of Scripture.

The subject of this chapter is of peculiar interest. We have had to deal with literature which has been "spoken against," not only by the unspiritual criticism of modern rationalists, but by the voice of the primitive Church; literature which it is

certainly possible for us to reject from the Canon without in the least repudiating our faith in the Bible as a whole. But we have made the important discovery that, approaching these books with an open mind and with no desire to maintain a preconceived theory, we are able to distinguish very clearly the intrinsic qualities which led the early framers of the Canon to include them in the collection of Sacred Scriptures. We have felt no inclination to reject any one of these books, though we have seen reason to alter some traditional opinions about them. We find in brief, as has been already said, that the books are not true because they are found in the Bible, but they are in the Bible because they are true. Their truth is by no means that of infallibility. They do not make the claim for themselves, and only their unconscious enemies would make it for them. Theirs is truth of a different kind—it is self-evidential truth, which dawns upon the candid mind and the open heart of those who peruse them; truth like the light which breaks through the barriers of cloud and mist and finds a ready entrance wherever prejudice has not drawn its impenetrable veil.

We conclude our survey of these briefer Epistles with a sense of some astonishment that men and churches who professed to believe in them still had

such a radical doubt, and even such an active unbelief, that they considered it to be the only way of protecting their defencelessness to rear a gigantic breastwork of dogma, which should forbid all inquiry and hinder all approach except on the condition of a blind and unquestioning admission of the dogma.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE JOHANNINE WRITINGS.

THERE is a general consensus of opinion that the writings which have come down to us under the name of John form the latest development of revelation, and utter the last voice of direct inspiration in Holy Scripture. In these writings we are to see the coping-stone of a great structure; here the truth of God attains a completeness which justifies the faith of Christendom, that the Bible contains all things necessary to salvation, and constitutes in its entirety a book apart, a great Word of God, or, to use the common term, a Revelation. But this consensus of opinion is rather on the surface than fundamental, for it covers a great difference of view which must at once be admitted. One set of Christians regard John as the last voice of revelation because the Apocalypse is the last book in the Bible, and affords a supernatural forecast of the events which were to fill

the interval between the foundation of the Church and the end of the world. Another set of Christians give to John this attribute of finality on the ground of the Fourth Gospel and the Three Epistles, which represent the highest development, and the most spiritual and far-reaching interpretation, of the central doctrine of Christianity—the doctrine of the Person and the Work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now the weightiest considerations forbid a reconciliation of these two views, and make it necessary for us to choose between them. According to the first view the Apocalypse was written in the reign of Domitian—that is, in the last decade of the first century.[1] This means that it was written at the same time as the Fourth Gospel or later. Now this view seems to be on literary and psychological grounds quite untenable. The only hypothesis on which the two works can be attributed to the same writer is that an interval of years gave time for the unexampled change in the style and the thought of the two compositions. Each of them is as distinct in its character as anything in literature. Thomas Carlyle and Mr. Froude are not more marked than the Apocalypse and the Fourth Gospel.

[1] This view rests mainly on the opinion of Irenæus, quoted by Eusebius. The Apocalypse, said that father, *οὐ πρὸ πολλοῦ χρόνου ἑωράθη, ἀλλὰ σχεδὸν ἐπὶ τῆς ἡμετέρας γενεᾶς πρὸς τῷ τέλει τῆς Δομετιανοῦ ἀρχῆς.* (Eus., *Hist. Eccl.*, v. 8, p. 220.)

The only supposition, therefore, on which we can imagine that a piece of Froude came from the pen of Carlyle is that time has elapsed between the Froude and the Carlyle. If we are to hold that the Apocalypse was written by the writer of the Fourth Gospel, we must adopt the view to which all internal evidence points—that it was written early in the life of the author, we must push it back to the earliest date that the facts seem to admit of.

The investigation on which we are now to embark starts, therefore, from the position accepted by almost all modern scholars, that the Apocalypse stands in date somewhere between the Epistles of Paul and the Fourth Gospel. It starts also from the position that the Fourth Gospel and its little satellites, the three Epistles, came into existence at the very end of the first century,[1] as the coping-stone of New Testament revelation. If this position seems to the reader arbitrary, it need not be pressed ; but the same method which is here employed in estimating the revelation of these Johannine Writings may

[1] It is well to remind the reader that the passage from Hippolytus (*Ref. Hær.* vii. 22), which cites Basilides as quoting the Fourth Gospel in these terms, *τὸ λεγόμενον ἐν τοῖς εὐαγγελίοις, Ἦν τὸ φῶς τὸ ἀληθινὸν ὃ φωτίζει πάντα ἄνθρωπον ἐρχόμενον εἰς τὸν κόσμον*, shows that about the year 125 B.C., that is, in the first quarter of the Second Century, our Fourth Gospel was recognised among the Gospels; while Papias (70–140 A.D.), on the testimony of Eusebius (*Hist. Eccl.*, iii. 39) quotes from the First Epistle of John, which must have been written after the Gospel.

be applied to them on the traditional supposition. The present writer confesses that the view which treats the Apocalypse and the Gospel as coming from the same pen about the same time would seem to him too improbable to deserve discussion ; but the essential qualities of the revelation contained in the two books would not, as the discussion will show, be materially affected even by so entirely gratuitous and unscholarly a hypothesis.

Our first inquiry, then, is into the nature of the Apocalypse, or, according to the traditional title, "The Revelation of John the Theologian." Now it is essential for the understanding of this remarkable book to remember that it does not stand alone in late Jewish and early Christian literature. It is one of a class. The Book of Daniel is the noblest type of this class before Christ, the Apocalypse of John is far the greatest of this class after Christ.[1] The general characteristic of these Apocalyptic writings was that a writer, in times of great trial and tribulation, put into the lips of some well-known personage forecasts, visions, consolations, and exhortations, couched in more or less symbolical language, and avoided the dangers of prosecution or anim-

[1] See Article on *Apocalyptic Literature* in *Encyl. Brit.* (Ed. ix.), where the contents are summarised of (1) The Book of Enoch ; (2) The Fourth Book of Ezra ; (3) The Book of Jubilees ; (4) The Assumption of Moses ; (5) The Sibyllines ; (6) The Apocalypse of Baruch, &c.

adversion by the use of cryptograms and allegorical names. It is now generally supposed that the Book of Daniel was issued to support the faith of the Jews in the terrible times of Antiochus Epiphanes. In the same way it appears that the great Apocalypse of John was issued when the first waves of persecution and calamity began to break over the primitive Christian Community. But while there are certain characteristics common to all these Apocalypses, there is one feature of the Apocalypse before us which distinguishes it sharply from all that were purely Jewish, and gives it a notable pre-eminence among those which, like Enoch and the Sibyllines, contained many Christian elements ; the Jewish Apocalypses had not and could not have any actual knowledge of the Messiah whom they foretold as the solution of Israel's difficulties ; but the Apocalypse of John centres round the Crucified Lord, who was at once "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the World," and the Risen Judge of the Earth which He died to save. "The author knows"—so writes Professor Harnack —"whom he and the Christian Community have to expect ; to him Jesus Christ is the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the Lord of the world and of history." It is in this distinguishing feature that we are to seek for the revelation which shines through the somewhat obscure and undecipherable

imagery of the Book. It is, in a word, as the opening sentence says, "a revelation of Jesus Christ"; it is a manifestation of the Risen One, which is in some ways an advance on that which was made to St. Paul, and leads us on to the supreme manifestation which is made in the Fourth Gospel. The significance of Calvary is displayed in the image of "the Lamb that had been slain before the foundation of the world," in whose blood the saints have washed their robes and made them white. But the Conquering Saviour who, having died to save, returns to overthrow His enemies and secure His victory, seems to take precedence of all other conceptions. In one passage the teaching of the Fourth Gospel is anticipated; for this Conquering Saviour is called, "The Word of God."[1] The manifestation of God, which was made in the human person of Jesus, receives a further development—an advance even on St. Paul's experience of Him—in this inspired conception of the Lamb, slain for the sins of the world, yet the firstborn from the dead, the ruler of the kings of the earth, the

[1] It is the opinion of Harnack that this clause, *καὶ κέκληται τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ὁ λόγος τοῦ Θεοῦ*, was inserted by one who had become familiar with the Fourth Gospel. This is plausible, for the preceding verse (xix. 12) had just stated that the name of the rider on the white horse was unknown to any one but himself. Apart, however, from this supposed interpolation, it will be admitted that Christ, as He is presented in the first chapters of the Apocalypse, is in many respects an anticipation of the presentation which is characteristic of the Fourth Gospel.

King of kings and Lord of lords. The fulness and certainty of His victory over the world, the glory of His redeemed, and the Heavenly City which He has gone to prepare, are depicted in a glowing and rapturous language which stands quite by itself in the New Testament. What the seer saw we are enabled to see; and the ultimate triumph of our Lord has been graven on our hearts as an article of faith by this rich and moving imagery. A comparison, then, of the Revelation of John with the other Apocalypses which have come down to us should leave us in no doubt about the question, in what its revelation consists. To put the answer briefly, the revelation consists in showing the complete triumph of our Lord Jesus Christ achieved in spite of, and even through, the persecutions, trials, and calamities to which His servants and saints are exposed in the present difficult world. Beyond the tumult there is peace. Above the warring states and sovereigns is the Great White Throne. Before the King of kings all powers and dominions, nay, even the heaven and the earth, must flee away and find no place. It is the pæan of redemption; it is the exulting certitude of a new heaven and a new earth in which dwells righteousness. If it is said that this is an aspiration rather than a demonstration, a fervent and eager demand rather than a fulfilment, it may be

answered that the revelation lies precisely in this, that a heart, which like John's is entirely possessed with the Lord who has loved him and loosed him from his sins through His blood (i. 5), receives an inward assurance which will on occasion shape itself in outward visions, that the Saviour, who has wrought so powerfully in one, must go on conquering and to conquer until the Enemy is bound and cast for ever into the burning lake (xx. 10). The revelation rests on the most sure word of prophecy, the inward witness of the Spirit to a heart that is washed and saved.

But when we turn from this general truth of revelation to inquire how far the details may be pressed, we are at once involved in many difficulties to which the conflicts of interpreters are a striking witness rather than a satisfactory solution. The author speaks of the things which he records as "shortly coming to pass" (i. 1). "The time is at hand," he says (ver. 3). And when he puts down the pen he repeats this conviction (xx. 10, 12), and even speaks as if the events were so near that no time remained for repentance: the unrighteous must remain unrighteous, and the holy must remain holy, for the chance of change is as good as past. By this strong language at the beginning and at the end of the book we seem shut up to two alternatives: either we must regard the

things described in the book as having in the main [1] already come to pass, or we must admit that the author was mistaken in his anticipations, sharing with Paul and Peter the belief that the return of the Lord would be "within the generation," the belief which, we have already observed, had to be modified during the time covered by the New Testament writings. While these seem to be the two alternatives, there is a compromise between them which is certainly worth stating. It is possible that the main outline of the prophecies was sketched and filled in from events which were passing before the writer's eyes, but that, quite in the manner of the Old Testament prophets, the seer saw the Last Things, the judgment and the victory of the Lamb, just over the horizon of his own range of vision, and thus described the ultimate issue, which was far enough away, as near at hand, because in his mind's eye it filled the heavens, above the immediate objects which occupied his foreground, with stupendous images. Let us suppose, for example, that he wrote in the first instance just at the time when "the great beast," the Roman Empire, had reached its lowest depth of licentiousness, cruelty, and blasphemy in the person of Nero; when the first

[1] In the main, we say, because the mention of a period of a thousand years shows that though the evolution of events was to begin "quickly" it could not be finished quickly.

martyrs had been slain, including, if tradition is to be trusted, Peter and Paul; and shortly after the monster himself, the fifth of the Roman Emperors who claimed to be God, had received his death-stroke, but was almost universally believed to be hidden away, and about to return to vanquish his contending successors and establish himself as the eighth Divus Cæsar.[1] He saw before his eyes the blasphemous Empire (xiii. 5) engaged in persecuting the saints of Jesus (xiii. 7, xvii. 6, xviii. 20–24), and all his view of the sufferings of Christians and his hope of deliverance would be coloured by these events. If we may suppose that the book was not yet finished in 70 A.D., then chap. xi. may be based on the unspeakable sufferings which were endured in the siege of Jerusalem (ver. 8). Thus his prophetic denunciations always point to the destruction of the great city, Rome, which had been wearing out the saints of the Lord (see chaps. xiv. and xvii.). After the judgment of this pitiless and corrupt Babylon the triumphant Saviour appears; the beast, with the false prophet, is destroyed; and Satan, whose vicegerent on earth the beast had been, is cast into the abyss for a thousand years. Beyond that blessed period during

[1] The cryptogram 666 seems to be the equivalent of Cæsar Nero in Hebrew, thus: קסר = 100, ס = 60, ר = 200, נ = 50, ר = 200, ו = 6, ן = 50 the sum total = 666.

which the martyrs, who had resisted the beast, should reign with Christ, Satan is seen finally overthrown, and the New Order appears under the imagery of a perfect city descending out of Heaven.

How impossible it is to press the literal meaning of the imagery is seen from chap. xiv., where the "first-fruits unto God and the Lamb" are described as 144,000 (presumably the same as those in chap. vii.) men who had abstained from marriage (ver. 4). In that number St. Paul could be included, but not St. Peter. Or if we are to look for these "purchased out of the earth" in later ages, or in our own, we know no authority for attaching this singular importance to virginity, except the authority which the Roman Church has presumably derived from this passage. But a still more striking difficulty in the way of accepting with any literalness the language of the book occurs in its references to the eternal punishment of the persons who worship the beast (xiv. 11, xx. 10, 15). Nothing seems more explicit than these statements that the devil and the beast and the false prophet shall "be tormented day and night for ever," and all who are not found written in the book of life shall be cast into the same lake of fire. But in the very midst of these expressions occurs a curious symbolic statement which makes us hesitate to read the language in any literal sense; at ver. 14 not only are the devil and the

beast cast into the lake of fire, but Death and Hades share the same fate. And if we may use this as a key it will seem doubtful whether the writer is thinking of persons at all, and whether he is not speaking all the time in allegory.

But the interpretation of details does not affect the broad conclusion at which we arrived. However we may mistrust the elaborate systems of prophetic forecasts which have been tortured out of the book the book itself is certainly a "revelation of Jesus Christ," and to it we owe a view of Him and a knowledge of Him which we should hardly have gained from Peter, Paul, and the Fourth Gospel, if "John the Theologian" had not written, or if, with Luther, we were to set his Apocalypse aside as valueless.

We now come to the other Johannine Writings, the Gospel and the three Letters, which tradition has attributed to the Apostle John. Notwithstanding the numerous interesting questions which arise in connection with this little group of books, there should be little difficulty in distinguishing the sense in which they are a revelation of God. According to the view which is here taken, they form the last word of Biblical revelation. Though in bulk they are little more than a thirty-sixth part of the Bible, intrinsically they are the most precious and most momentous of the whole. They are, if we may use a metaphor, the

golden cross on the summit of the stately pile, the highest and the nearest to heaven of all that has been written for our instruction and our salvation. The message in them is in a certain sense independent of their authorship, and he who has learnt to understand them has been able to watch with a quiet heart the controversy which has raged for the last few decades about the question whether the Apostle John was the writer.

Looking for a moment at the Gospel by itself, we may notice two facts which form the two poles of the discussion. On the one hand it is patent that here is a book which stands alone, not only in literature as a whole, but even in the specific literature which we call Scripture. A broad divergence from the Synoptical Gospels is obvious to the most hasty reader. The style of the writer is so unique that even in the briefest quotation it is immediately recognisable. The whole book, too, is cast in the same style; it matters not whether the words are in the mouth of Jesus, or of John the Baptist, or of the Jews, or of Pilate, or whether they are simply part of the narrative, it is always the same mind that shapes the phraseology and sets this distinctive stamp upon the language. It is this strongly subjective character of the whole that has led many critics to question whether it could be accepted as anything but an imaginative

creation of a decidedly original mind. But, on the other hand, the opposite pole of the discussion is this : no narrative in Scripture or outside of Scripture is more distinctly marked by verisimilitude. There is a certain minuteness and accuracy in detail, there is a careful observance of a chronological framework, there is even an air of deliberately correcting the wrong impressions made by previous narratives, and an attempt to give cohesion and distinctness to the scattered memoirs of the Lord, all of which seem to indicate a writer who saw and heard the things of which he speaks.

There is a further characteristic of the book which throws an interesting light on the question of authorship. While other disciples are mentioned directly by name, John, the brother of James, is always referred to by a periphrasis ; sometimes it is "the disciple whom Jesus loved," sometimes "the disciple which lay on Jesus' breast," sometimes "the disciple which was known unto the high priest." In the appendix of the book (xxi. 24) it is expressly said that this unnamed disciple was actually the author and the witness of the things contained in the Gospel. Now it may be a matter of small importance to say that the Gospel was written by John, for after all "the author of the Fourth Gospel and the Epistles" is better known to us than "John, the son of thunder." But

where a writing so distinctly and yet so modestly claims to be written by an eyewitness (see especially xix. 35) it is necessary to bring far more evidence than has ever yet been brought to upset its authority and value. Considering the unbroken tradition coming down from the end of the Second Century that John is the author, we may at any rate assume that this eyewitness was the well-known Apostle until some decisive evidence has been brought to show that he was not. And even if that evidence is some day brought we shall still be bound to maintain, in the absence of direct refutation, that the work is from the pen of an eyewitness who "testified that he had seen."

It is not often that early traditions throw any very specific or credible light upon these literary questions, but the language in which the Muratorian Canon (160–170 A.D.) describes the origin of our Gospel, if not true to historical fact, at any rate gives a very plausible account of the characteristics which distinguish this Gospel from the other three. "The [author] of the Fourth Gospel," says the Canon,[1] "was John, one of the disciples. At the exhortation of his fellow-disciples and bishops he said: Fast with me for three days, and let us tell one another what

[1] Dr. Charteris has deciphered the text of Tregelles with great care, but it is only right to say that the translation cannot claim to be more than probable. (*Canonicity*, A. H. Charteris, D.D., p. 6.)

may be revealed to each of us. The same night it was revealed to the Apostle Andrew that, with the revision of them all, John, in his own name, should write the complete narrative. . . . What wonder, then, if John so frequently introduces details with the personal claim, *what we saw with our eyes, and heard with our ears, and our hands touched, this have we written to you.* For thus he claims to be not only an eyewitness and an auditor, but a consecutive writer of all the wonderful things of the Lord."

The gist of this tradition, then, is that John became, after a solemn spiritual preparation, the spokesman of the apostles in committing to a permanent record this life of Jesus. We are carried down to a late period in the First Century, when the Apostolic band must have been thinned by death, and when the new generation were anxious to conserve every fragment of the life and the doings of the Lord which still lingered in the minds of the survivors. And now, not laying any undue stress on this matter of authorship, but taking this Gospel, and the kindred Epistles, simply as the latest utterance of the circle which had known Jesus in the flesh, we may proceed to estimate the nature and the volume of the revelation thus given to us.

At the end of the First Century, when the Fourth Gospel and the First Epistle saw the light, the

Church had already travelled far from the time and the conditions of the Pauline letters. In Alexandria and in Asia there was within the circle of the faithful a ferment of new ideas; the philosophical speculations which had flowed from Neo-Platonism, and the turgid dreams which haunted the imagination of the East, met in the nascent Christian communities. St. Paul, the most potent name in Asia Minor, had, by his speculative methods and his love of mysticism, taught men to dwell on the idea of a transcendental Christ, a Christ whom he did not know "after the flesh," but only as an indwelling power, a Christ to whom the details of the earthly life had become almost irrelevant. St. Paul, it will be remembered, never refers to any incidents of the Gospel History except the supreme fact of the Crucifixion and the Resurrection. The whole process of redemption was presented in St. Paul's later writings in what one may almost call an *à priori* light. "By revelation was made known unto me the mystery," he wrote to the community in which the Apostle John was living,[1] "as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye can perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ." He conceived this mystery which angels desired to look into as a conflict wrought out between Christ

[1] Eph. iii. 3, 4.

and the spiritual powers of darkness, principalities and dominations, in the upper air. In these grand but shadowy modes of thought was found a fruitful soil for the germ of Gnosticism, as it was called, to find a lodgment. There was much in the Pauline doctrine which, to use the expression of the Petrine writer, "the ignorant and unstedfast" could easily "wrest" (2 Pet. iii. 16). And already before the First Century was passed there were professing Christians who had pressed the idea of "not knowing Christ after the flesh" to the point of denying the fleshly life of Christ altogether. Docetism was teaching that the earthly body and the earthly life were only an appearance; the real Son of God was not, and could not be, in the flesh. Here was a peril indeed for the infant Church. To spiritualise Christ as St. Paul had done was necessary—it was the special mission of St. Paul to do this in his own person and in his teaching; but to spiritualise Him *away*, as Docetism threatened to do, to reduce the Incarnation to a phantasmal pageant, was to cut at the very root of the saving doctrine. Not one jot of St. Paul's transcendentalism must be surrendered—it was all vital—but, on the other hand, the simple gospel narrative, the human life that was lived, the manifestation of mercy and power in Him who spoke with human lips and looked through human eyes,

must be maintained and vindicated. What was needed seemed to be this: to bring the Spiritual Christ and the Historical Christ into a clear and manifest relation to one another—to show, what previous Memoirs had hardly attempted to show, that He who was "the firstborn of all creation, and the image of the invisible God" (Col. i. 15), according to St. Paul's doctrine, was also that Jesus of whom the Evangelists had written; to show how that experience of "Christ being revealed within" the believer, and of the life becoming no longer the individual that lived, but Christ who lived in him, was really the outcome of all that Jesus "began both to do and to teach" in the days of His flesh.

This is the task of the Fourth Gospel. It is the rewriting of the earthly life of Jesus in the light of that Divine and spiritual life which now for two generations He had been living in the hearts of believers. It is the reconsideration of the Person and the Work and the Words of Jesus, after a matured religious experience had revealed the significance of what He had been, and what He had done. While He was yet in the flesh there were necessarily "many things to say to the disciples which they could not then bear" (John xvi. 12). Many things were done which they could not know at the time, but should understand after (xiii. 7).

Such a promise as that which the Memoirs recorded, that where two or three should meet in His name there He would be, and that He would be with His own unto the end of the world, was inevitably a dark and untried saying at the time of its utterance ; and while He was yet with them the disciples would take such an image as that of the Vine and the Branches, or such a truth as that of the Bread from Heaven, to be only a strong *façon de parler*. It was only after He had gone, and indeed long after He was gone, that believers were in a position to estimate that Spiritual indwelling and continued Divine activity in the heart which the Lord had promised when He said, "I will not leave you desolate, I come unto you" (xiv. 18). "The Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you" (xiv. 26). The great characteristic of the Fourth Gospel is that it grasps in one hand the Philosophy of the Gnostic, the teaching about the Eternal Word that was from the beginning with God, and was God, and in the other hand the simple facts of the life of Jesus, and brings them together in a harmonious whole. It starts in the transcendental regions, and shows the Word becoming flesh, but proceeds at once to show how this marvellous manifestation, "full of grace and truth," was seen and heard and handled, even if at the time he

was not understood. It is obvious that the incidents which are narrated are only a selection (xxi. 25). From a memory which retained a vast multitude of particulars, a few facts and discourses are selected, which, unlike the events given in the Memoirs almost at random, all directly bear on the one theme. The key to every chapter and verse is the great truth of the Prologue. The purpose of every narrative is quite specific—it is that the reader may believe that the man Jesus is the Messias, the Son of God, and that believing the believer may have life in His name (xx. 31). Each passage is like a shaft taken from the armoury, but the arrow head is always the same; it is to penetrate the shield of unbelief, and bring each person to the personal acceptance of Jesus as the Saviour. It may be worth while to hastily glance at the selection of topics to see how unified and concentrated this crowning treatise of the New Testament is.

In chap. i. is the simple record of the first disciples coming to Jesus as the "Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." That distinctive testimony of John the Baptist, omitted in the popular memoirs, was not likely to be forgotten by the author, who was presumably one of the two disciples sent by that announcement in humble inquiry to Jesus (i. 37). If the expression was not intelligible until

the tragedy of the Cross was finished, it shone like a star in the memory of one who had experienced now for many years how "the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth from all sin" (1 John i. 7). In chap. ii. is a truth which passed unobserved in the records of the tradition, that Jesus, from the first days of His ministry, set about "the cleansing of the temple," and declared the certainty of His resurrection. In chap. iii. comes at once the inner secret of the change which is made by belief in Jesus, the new spiritual birth, and the confirming testimony that God is true; the "eternal" life which at once begins when any one "receives" Jesus. In chap. iv. the Messias is seen revealing Himself to a sinful nature and transforming it, while He announces the passing of Judaism into the new Spiritual Order, which admits no more of earthly temples and sacred places. In chap. v. the healing of an infirm man is made the occasion for asserting the relation between the Son of Man and the Omnipotent, life-giving God: "As the Father hath life in himself, even so gave he to the Son also to have life in himself" (ver. 26). In chap. vi. the miracle of multiplying the loaves is made the occasion for teaching the master-doctrine of a personal faith in Jesus as the means of sustaining from day to day the Divine life given in the new birth. In chap. vii.

the same truth is reinforced under the image of the living water, "the Spirit which they that believed on him were to receive."

Omitting the beautiful episode in viii. 1–11, which comes from the ordinary memoirs, and is inserted here because it is an illustration of the illuminating influence of Jesus in dealing with the conscience, we have in chaps. viii. and ix. the truth which was mentioned in the Prologue (i. 4), drawn out in the explicit statement, and the miraculous deed, of the Word, who shows in what way He is the Light of the World. In chap. x. Jesus is presented as the Good Shepherd — the Being spoken of in Ezek. xxxiv., who was to come and gather together His scattered sheep, and save them from the hireling shepherds that fed not the flock, but themselves. In chap xi., with a minuteness of detail which challenges history, Jesus appears as "the Resurrection and the Life," whose voice can summon the dead from the graves, the culminating earthly manifestation of the Word made flesh. Chap. xii. presents the solemn spectacle of the Word passing to the doom inflicted by His own that received Him not, "the Lamb of God" led to the slaughter. Chaps. xiii.–xvii. are the unveiling of the inner consciousness of Jesus at the moment when He had finished the work which God had given Him to do, and was just return-

ing to the glory which He had with the Father before the world began; and the remaining chapters repeat, with numberless little details which the current narratives had overlooked, the events of the crucifixion and the resurrection, in which the Good Shepherd "laid down his life and took it again" for the people whom He had come to save. The Word was made flesh, lived for a time in the Tabernacle of Humanity. Even His intimate friends at the time saw rather the Tabernacle than the inmate, and only gradually did the Divine Nature of the Son of Man become clear to them. The current traditions recorded the outward facts of this incarnation and the dense misunderstanding of the observers. But seen in the light of a growing spiritual experience, explained by the Spirit that the Lord had sent as His witness, even the details of the earthly life were all instinct with the great truth. The Tabernacle became transparent in the intuition of memory, and the life lived in the flesh could be presented as, what it was, the Divine and the Spiritual life which is capable of transforming the flesh, calling it from the grave, and raising it up at the last day.

This restating of the Earthly life through the medium of a spiritual experience of one who had been an eyewitness, and afterwards for many years

had lived with the Spirit, constantly taking of the things of Christ and revealing them to him, is the note or the characteristic of the Fourth Gospel. With this key to the position one can see at once why the Fourth Gospel should seem to the Christian the most priceless of our possessions, the true chart of the inward life, the keenest weapon for attacking unbelief and bringing sinners into the faith of our Lord ; and at the same time should seem to minds like John Stuart Mill's, minds that are strangers to the experience of an indwelling Christ, a sad declension from the clearness and the simplicity of the Synoptical Gospels. Men who are determined to see in Jesus nothing but a human being will find the Fourth Gospel a sealed book. But it is really the great witness, historical and spiritual, that the human being, Jesus, was the Eternal Son of God, who became flesh in order that all who believe on Him should share His eternal life. It is the consummate revelation of God ; but of course it must remain unintelligible to those who have settled it with themselves beforehand that such a consummation of His revelation shall on no conceivable terms be accepted. It is the supreme and all-sufficing Light on human life and human destiny ; they who avert their eyes from the Master-light of all our seeing will not unnaturally remain in darkness, and

in their darkness will try to show that the light which they have rejected is unauthentic, that the author of the book which presents it is a mere impostor, that his simplicity is the cloak of his imposition, and his transcendent truths are the proof that he is a liar. After all, as Jesus says in this Gospel, if men refuse the revelation here given there is nothing more to be offered to them; if they have not had the light there is hope for them; but if they have seen the light and call it darkness, "if they have both seen and hated both me and my Father," what remains? When men reject the Sun as the source of light they must indeed be sore put to it for an illumination.

But when we have thus apprehended the main revelation of these Johannine Writings, the identification of the human Jesus with the invisible God who is Light (1 John i. 5, and John viii. 12), and the human sonship of God, which is produced by faith in the revealed Son of God—we have only touched the fountain-head; there are, if we may so express it, streams of revelation which flow out of it in many directions. To understand this we must return to the conditions which prevailed in the Church at the end of the First Century, when the books were written. The magnificent absoluteness of Paul's teaching had been misunderstood

in another important respect. The doctrine that we are saved by faith and not by works had been "wrested" into the notion that if we have faith, our conduct does not matter. The attempt of James to stem this misconception was not successful because he did not sufficiently grasp St. Paul's grand principle of the Divine Person who is the object of faith. We saw how the Epistle of James was essentially a Jewish writing; it lacked the cardinal inspiration of the New Faith. But our author, in the *First Epistle of John*, stems the misconception in a far more effectual way. Repeating with clear emphasis the mighty principle of Paul that Jesus "is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the whole world" (ii. 2), and bringing into distinctness his own beautiful doctrine that the believer in Christ is really a new birth, something which is "born of God," he proceeds with irresistible logic to show that every one who is begotten of God must do righteousness: if any one professes to be born of God and yet continues in sin, he disproves his own claim; he is really nothing but a child of the devil (iii. 8). The whole purpose of Christ's manifestation was to destroy the works of the devil and to produce a new progeny of sinless beings. By thus identifying the New Birth with the victory over sin, and

showing that faith in Christ was necessarily a means of overcoming the world and living in obedience to that Heavenly Father who has begotten us anew, this closing utterance of the New Testament set the whole Christian life on the supernatural basis where alone it can be maintained. The polemics of the Pauline and Petrine and Jacobean letters are left far behind; and in sentences of crystalline simplicity which might have come from the lips that preached the Sermon on the Mount, the vital truth is asserted for all time, and the manifold errors of Antinomianism are prophetically refuted. We saw how some of St. Paul's regulations were not entirely free from the spirit of casuistry, and we had to find the revelation of his ethics rather in the connection of moral precepts with the root principle of redemption than in the infallibility of his decisions in special cases. But in the Johannine Writings moral conduct is exhibited in the clear light of revelation; for the Unction of the Holy One, the operation of the Spirit in the heart, is presented as the power that leads the believer into all truth, and even raises him above the dependence on an earthly teacher (1 John ii. 27). This is the great principle concerning conduct which was practically realised, no doubt, by St. Paul in his life, but was

never explicitly shaped in his Epistles—the Christian who is "clean by the word which the Lord speaks to him" is grafted into the person of the Lord like a branch in a vine, and brings forth what St. Paul calls "the fruit of the Spirit," not by a studied imitation of another, even though that other be Christ Himself, but by the actual assimilation of the life of Christ through faith, by that supernatural development of the "new creation" which God carries on in the life that is completely surrendered to Him. All this, it may truly be said, is implicitly taught in the other Epistles of the New Testament; but in the Johannine Writings it is explicitly revealed and put into phraseology so direct and convincing that even a child can understand it.

Or if we wish to follow another of the streams of revelation which flow from this abundant fountain-head, we are borne along to the ultimate truth about God, which is also the ultimate truth of human conduct. When the fact is once established that Jesus and the Father are one, so that he who has seen Jesus has seen the Father, the inference is already close at hand that God is not only the all-powerful, not only the Holy and Righteous One, but is also Love. This was the truth which religion had laboured to establish. The Law and the Prophets

were alike in travail with it. But it came only in demonstration and power by Jesus Christ. While it is correct to say that there is no proof of it apart from Christ, it is also correct to say that with Christ before us and in us we need no further proof. The brief statement made in 1 John iv. 8, 16—made so quietly because it is so inevitable an outcome of the whole teaching of the Epistle and the Gospel—is indeed the crown of Revelation. God is Love. No one can say any more about Him ; apart from this supreme revelation no one has said, or could even now say, as much. From those first authentic Divine manifestations which we examined in the Book of Genesis, through all the slow developments of Sinai, Zion, Babylon, the Temple, the Altar, and the Law, this mighty truth was dawning, at last to break into the full day in the face of Jesus Christ. And as from the fact that God is righteous flows the necessity that they who are born of God should be righteous too, so from the fact that God is love flows the great new commandment that we should love one another. "He that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in him." St. Paul and St. Peter had taught the same truth in another way ; it was reserved for this Epistle to present it with the absoluteness of a self-evident principle, and the cogency of a revealed Image of God.

Notwithstanding the fiery appeals of St. Paul, and the beautiful canticle of 1 Cor. xiii., notwithstanding the gentle exhortations of Peter, there were still men like Diotrephes (3 John 9), who loved to have the pre-eminence, who would not receive the brethren, and who cast out of the Church those who would: it was still supposed that you could be a child of God and harbour hatred in your heart, or that correctness of faith would pass as a substitute for brotherly love. These latest utterances of the New Testament annihilate that delusion for ever. "We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren. He that loveth not abideth in death" (1 John iii. 14). People who have fed their minds upon apocalyptic literature, and have learnt to pass their time in deciphering the records of the future, are disposed to regard those doubtful prophecies as the summit of Revelation. But it is more in harmony with the whole gist of Revelation to claim this truth about Love as the summit of God's self-manifestation. God is love; if, then, you are born of God you will love: and love will be the witness to you of your new birth. How simple it seems! Yet Revelation is completed in this assertion, its claim is justified precisely so far as the Divine Miracle is wrought out in practice, and men know that we

are the disciples of Jesus because we love one another. It is not the least of the signs by which we know that the old view of the Bible is not the right one, that it tended constantly to hide from the eyes of those who held it this final truth of revelation. If the Dutch Boers exterminated the Hottentots on the authority of the Book of Judges, other orthodox persons have made the doctrine of Biblical Infallibility an excuse for many of the most uncharitable judgments that were ever passed, and for some of the most malignant feelings that were ever cherished. And it is one of the greatest recommendations of the view of Revelation which has been advocated in this book, that when we see how all revelation grows from less to more, and finally finds its consummation in the Truth that God is Love, and in the precept, "See that ye love one another," we are able to bring all theories and doctrines to the test of this final touchstone, and to know that everything in religion is wrong which lessens love, and that no orthodoxy can be admitted which does not lead the orthodox to love, not only one another, but even those who differ from them.

It may be urged, however, that the Second Epistle of John contains in ver. 10 the very statement which has been made the authority for some of those uncharitable judgments that Christians have been

accustomed to pass. And this leads us to observe that the Second and Third Epistles of John do not stand at all on the same basis as the First Epistle and the Gospel. Only very late did they obtain a recognition in the Canon. Out of the thirteen verses of the Second Epistle eight are only echoes of the First Epistle, and there is no new truth contained in these brief documents which would entitle us to call them revelation. The command given in 2 John 11 has been misunderstood and wrested. At the most it was a caution, under the circumstances, to a lady of influence, not to give the weight of her sanction to false teachers who were upsetting the faith of the Church. It is no authority for abstaining from kindly social relations with those who differ from us in matters of faith. But the correct view of these Epistles is probably this: they come from the private correspondence of the "elder" who wrote the Gospel. Their chief point is, to say that they abstained from saying anything, because the writer hoped to see his correspondents shortly. And if we are right in including them in the Canon because the author is the canonical author John, we are also right in remembering the reluctance with which they were admitted as a reason for not attaching to them an undue importance.

We have thus passed in review all the writings

which have come down to us under the name of John, and we have seen reason for assenting, though on grounds different from those which are frequently maintained, to the belief that in these books we have the end of the revelation of God, which began in the admonitions given to the Patriarchs, was continued in the formation and organisation of the Mosaic people, gathered body through the prophets, and was consummated in Jesus Christ, first in His historical manifestation in the flesh, and afterwards in His prolonged existence and activity, through the work of the Spirit in the heart of His Church. In the beginning was the Word—by gradual and progressive preparations the world was made, humanity came into being, and its long education was effected, until the Word became flesh, and dwelt amongst us, since when He has been continually operating to produce in that which is flesh the spiritual or Eternal life, that His ransomed ones may be with Him where He is.

CHAPTER XV.

SUMMARY.

THE whole of this book is nothing more than the briefest summary of the great question. And yet it may be well to summarise in a few words the summary itself. It is not unlikely that a reader, who beforehand was unacquainted with the work of Biblical scholarship which has been busily prosecuted in England during the last decade, may feel for a moment that his view of the Bible has been destroyed by what he has read; he may have the forlorn sensation that he is standing in the midst of ruins; and in the shock of the discovery he may feel bitter against the author for telling him the truth. But this, he will find, is merely an illusion. Let him look round; he will find that the vital truth by which alone the religious principle within him is maintained stands unshaken, and all the firmer because it no longer even seems to rest upon questionable assumptions. Dealing with the Biblical literature in the

freest and frankest way, trying not to shut our eyes to any of the facts, we have found the essential truth and the intrinsic value of one part after another reasserted and demonstrated. The long history stands out as history, the authentic word of the Lord delivered to prophets maintains its authenticity. Everything points to Christ as truly, though not quite in the same way, as our fathers used to think. Christ is not disproved. Witnessed by trustworthy contemporary books, He is still more effectually witnessed by Himself, and by the actual and provable manifestation of Himself in us who believe. If the infallibility of the New Testament in a minute and verbal sense has to be surrendered, it is only that we may realise more keenly the Unction of the Holy One, which is given not only to the writers of Scripture, but to all who will in humility and faith receive it. If we are left with our eyes in some degree averted from the Book, it is only that they may be the more concentrated on the Person.

And if it is asked, But when once the letter of Scripture is found not to be *ipso facto* infallible, how are we to distinguish which part is authoritative and which is not? The answer is very simple, Come to Christ, accept Him as your Saviour, and receive from Him the Holy Spirit. With Him as your teacher

you are likely to discern more satisfactorily than under the guidance of an *à priori* dogma invented by men who supposed that only by such a fiction could the authority of Scripture be guaranteed. Or if it is still urged, What is one to do who is not a believer, but a heathen, an infidel, or an agnostic? the answer is simpler still, Let us, who believe, not prejudice his mind by enforcing a theory of the Bible as the condition of his reading it; let us leave him alone with the Book, and pray for him; the truth will find him, and the difficulties will not be a hindrance to him, for, indeed, all the difficulties are really made by the false theory about the Word of God.

It is quite possible that a man may read the opening chapter of the Bible, and be turned to God by the sublimity and force of the truth which it delivers; but if you insist that it is a scientific account of the Creation, which is meant to override the truths which Science has revealed, you at once seal the mind of an educated man against its influence. It is quite possible that the Book of Jonah may by its obvious inspiration reach the conscience of a reader and turn him to God;[1] but if you start with the demand that the episode of the fish is a matter of

[1] Indeed St. Jerome tells us concerning Cyprian, the famous bishop of Carthage, "Audisse sermonem Jonæ et ad pœnitentiam conversum."

faith you at once close the book and its message to the modern mind. And so on throughout. We have been led in our investigation to see that the Bible, left to itself, is its own best interpreter, but that the theories about it, and the buttresses constructed to support it, are generally the great hindrance to its work. We have seen that the Scriptures are they which testify of Christ, but that when they are placed before men as the authority that guarantees Christ, we dishonour Him, and by a false reverence to them we endanger their otherwise impregnable position. It was the complaint of our Lord against the men of His own day that "they searched the Scriptures because they thought that in *them* they had eternal life, but would not come to Him that they might have life."[1] And it is surely a complaint which He still has to urge against many of us. We have exalted the Scriptures above our Lord so as to make Him Himself seem to be dependent upon them: with a mistaken zeal we have given them the very title, viz., The Word of God, which is His own ineffable name. In our blindness we have attached such sacred significance to everything which is contained

[1] John v. 39; the R.V. gives the obvious sense of the original. It is not a little significant that the passage most frequently quoted as an authority for Bible study is indeed a warning against the substitution of Scripture, which is a mere witness, for the Saviour to whom it is meant to bear witness.

in the Biblical literature, that stories and facts, opinions and beliefs, occurring within these covers are invested all with a like authority, and presented all alike as the revelation of God, so that discrimination vanishes, and Christ is no longer permitted to be the criterion of the writings which existed to witness about Him. It is from this dangerous, and in the last resort, idolatrous perversion of Christianity, that the line of argument pursued in the foregoing pages is intended to deliver us. And if even one soul is led out of the comfortable but suffocating prison-house of the received dogma into the open air of the true Revelation, the author will not have toiled in vain.

FINIS.

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